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THE THEORIES OF ANARCHY AND OF LAW

A Midnight Debate

H. B. BREWSTER

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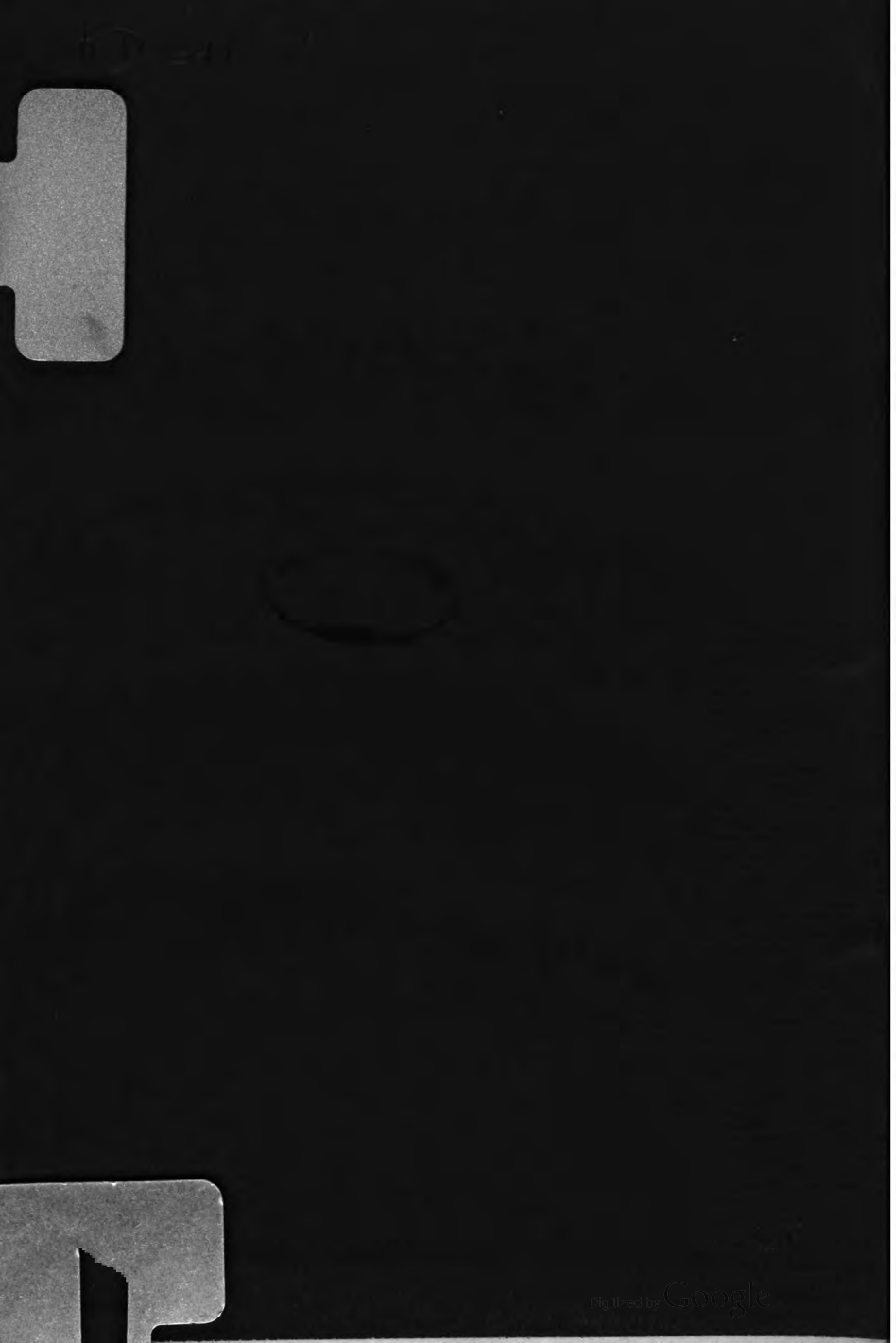
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THE THEORIES

OF ANARCHY AND OF LAW.

A MIDNIGHT DEBATE.

BY

H. B. BREWSTER.

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Debaters.

RALPH.

WILFRID.

LOTHAIRE.

HAROLD.

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Language the interpreter of sensuous experience, direct or indirect. In such cases information is given in utterances that taken separately retain their value. The work is one of representation.

SPEECH a work of production, the value of which lies not in any image conveyed, but in a mode of combination realized. In this case the utterances lose their value if disconnected. Synthetic thought conveys no information concerning outward realities, but is itself one of the outward realities by the play of which we exist. . . . . 14—22

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Answer to second difficulty: There is no general law.

Answer to third difficulty: If SPEECH is a work of creation and not of representation, as soon as we name it we are doing as one who asks a runner to stop that he may picture the race. Thus in proclaiming the outward reality of Speech, we are indeed in some manner creating the very reverse of what our words declare; we are setting up a fiction. But there is this to be said for it, that it claims no supremacy . . . 27—36

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THE THEORIES

OF ANARCHY AND OF LAW.

PART I.

HAROLD.

GENTLEMEN! this, as you well know, is the inn of the Moorish King. There he stands on the sign-board in front of our window, wrapped in moonlight, brooding on his old dream of unheard-of, impossible conquests, and mistaking, I have no doubt, each time the wind stirs, the creaking of his rusty hinges for the groan of dying infidels, or the rustling of the wild vine and honeysuckle for the murmur of enamoured slaves. Nor for hundreds of years has he heeded aught of the living, neither the busy noise of the street below him nor the hum of voices in this room, once his, where doubtless every act and scene of the human comedy has been played since then, until at last we came, and chose it as a midnight resort for music, wine, and words.

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RALPH.

Why, you have been preparing a speech!

HAROLD.

Possibly. And to go on with it I will tell you what my thoughts were just now as I waited for you, sitting by the open window, face to face with the Khalif.

Have you noticed that of late our discussions have flagged as though we had reached the point where people cease to interest each other, because they cease to be sincere, and keep something back?

We have talked a good deal in this room and have said many things which, with the assistance of this Spanish wine and some wonderful music, have seemed to us most memorable. Yet perhaps each one of us, if the truth were known, looks upon the sayings of his neighbour somewhat as on brilliant sparks destined to light up the darkness one instant and then die out, whereas his own wisdom seems to him a steady, continuous light because he knows where and how high the fire burns whence it emanates. That is what we ought to know of each other. For your thoughts really to interest me I must understand how you came by them, be sure that they are not purchased jewels, have

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seen the mine out of which you work them. I suppose there must be in every man who does not merely echo back the words of others, some characteristic vein of thought to which we ought to refer all his sayings to get their true significance; for it determines his attitude towards life. Indeed, if we knew this clearly—how a man feels about life, why he cares or does not care to live, I think his opinions in general and on all matters would be something better to us than random sparks. What is the use of living? Speak out one and all of you. If the subject is old, so is the world. If you have nothing new to say about it, so much the worse; but strike me your keynote. We must have it out between us; we must get out of our desultory talk; we must tighten the bonds of our circle, or we shall weary of them.

These are the orders of the chairman with whom I was conversing when you entered. To-night we render homage to the Moorish King. You have my question. What answer can you give?

WILFRID.

None, for it is not a sensible question.

RALPH.

I think it a perfectly sensible question, and

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one that a great many people can answer. Indeed, I fancy that no man who troubles his brains at all can avoid answering it in some more or less definite manner.

HAROLD.

I would like an answer that could stand criticism.

LOTHAIRE.

There are men who contend that reason is an insufficient instrument for arriving at truth, and that faith alone can give an ultimate basis to certitude. They would be of opinion that in asking for an answer that can stand criticism you are asking for too little. I am not sure that after all the best answer is not the old one: The object and sense of this life is to prepare for a future one. What weapon have you against those who set aside rational objections as worthless?

HAROLD.

No weapons at all. I have nothing to reply except that they can no more pretend to defend their assertion than I can to attack it. It puts an end to discussion on the subject.

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LOTHAIRE.

Yet, if all endeavours to account rationally for the fact of our existence should fail, should they be unable to give us a sense of security and turn out to be nothing but an endless vexation of spirit, we shall be glad to fall back on some religious faith.

RALPH.

Don't talk like a man of the Middle Ages, Lothaire. If you have nothing better to say in favour of faith than that we must turn to it because reason cannot answer a question that must be answered, you will convince no one. You squeeze your conclusion out of an argument, and it brings with it none of the collateral evidence, none of the stray glimpses and side gleams that distinguish genuine truths from mere verbal inferences.

The fact is that even among men of religious faith very few, only an extreme school, repudiate the help of reason or consider its data as opposed to revelation. A surprising amount of time and ingenuity is spent in reconciling the two. The spirit of rationalism pervades us. Humanity has got accustomed to criticise and ask for proof; no theory of life that assumes the uselessness of a

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way of thinking by which so many excellent results have been obtained, has any chance of getting a hearing, nor does it deserve it. No argument, however stringent it may seem at first sight, will stand against the mighty body of evidence that tells in favour of critical investigation.

LOTHAIRE.

Well, I grant that I spoke hastily. Of course I ought not to appeal to an argument as to a voucher for the superiority of faith; I cannot ask an inferior power to give credentials to a superior one. I think, as you do, that our trust will always go to the broader testimony, not to the closer-knit argument. And it is, in reality, simply because the rationalistic view of life seems to me narrow that I turn to a more complex and less artificial way of thinking. What I mean by faith is probably something very different from what you put under the word. But before I explain this more fully, I would like to know what purely rational scheme of life you have to set forward in answer to Harold's question.

RALPH.

Perhaps you will consider me a very simple, uncultured mind. Somehow I have learned this

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from what I have seen of persons and things here below, that there is a great advantage in being sensible, that is, in not letting any one order of thoughts carry us too far, but in keeping alive to the question as it works in practice, not as it frames itself to our minds when we have turned it into an abstract theme and ridden our thoughts on the subject as far as they will go. To answer Harold's question I should simply turn to what experience teaches us. We have only to look around us to see that what we have put as a philosophical problem is a practical question solved every day by thousands. We ask: What is the use of living? The proper way of putting it is this: Are there people who at the close of their life do not regret having lived? If so, they have practically answered our question. Don't say that their contentedness proves nothing, and that the query remains: What is the use of their having been happy? An abstract inquiry of that kind can meet with no answer, because in reality it concerns no one. We can only inquire of what use it has been to those particular individuals that they should have been happy. I suppose they would tell us that it has been of great use, and that they have ultimately no other idea of utility than that of the common character of things conducive to happiness.

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Or, if we choose to take another view, we can inquire as to what promotes the welfare of the species. All we have to consider is, firstly, whether there be certain paths or, if you will, certain combinations of inward doings and outward events that cause some men to thrive; and secondly, whether some lives are profitable to the community.

I would recommend bringing the discussion down from the metaphysical key in which Harold's question seems pitched. If there are any laws of private or public happiness, as there are laws of health, there must be great use in conforming to them, for by so doing we are carrying out the scheme of nature, fitting into it; we are going with the stream which opposition can no more check than the eddies in a river can force the current up hill.

I believe that such laws exist, however imperfect our knowledge of them may still be, and that by patient investigation we can extend that knowledge.

HAROLD.

Will there always be eddies, as you call them? Local movements that go against the general current? Revolts against the law? Men and hours of error? Or may we look forward to a

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state of perfection when all shall understand the law and find their happiness in obeying it?

RALPH.

I do not anticipate any such paradise on earth. The social state of things will never be absolutely good. What matter, provided it always improve? Its progress is worth striving for. There will always be unhappy men. Because some fail are we to conclude that there is no such thing as success and that life is not worth living? Take human nature as it is with its imperfections, see if any good is to be got out of it, and, if so, look upon that good as the true reason of our existence.

HAROLD.

One thing is not clear to me. You spoke just now of questions that can have no answer, because they concern no real subjects; and, instead of inquiring into the abstract value of happiness, you recommended our asking whether those who have been happy consider it an advantage; or again, how communities prosper. Surely the same method should apply to misery. Instead of conveniently putting it on the score of human nature and its imperfections we should inquire

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whether the unhappy deem their unhappiness a misfortune, and why social edifices fall to ruin. If the suffering of an individual should have been of no use to himself or to others—as, for instance, the torments of a madman—why should not that individual or his advocate deny the value of life? You must, according to your own position, account for his suffering to him or to others and find some profit in it for some one; you have no right to put it on the back of an abstraction such as human nature. Similarly, so long as there remains the slightest interval between absolute perfection and the social state of things, so long will you have something to account for that finds no place in your scheme of ideas. You are in the position of a man trying to make up a given sum by adding always something too little to cover the difference. And this leads me to doubt if there be not some great mistake at the bottom of the whole doctrine of progress, of which in its double aspect, moral and social, your views are an expression. We are continually hearing the praise of the triumph of life; what do you do with the other half of reality? What place in your scheme has destruction—not the partial destruction that accompanies integration, but the uncompensated waste, the wear and tear of life?

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LOTHAIRE.

Harold's criticism seems to me just. Whose profit is it that I should grow old and feeble and end in death? Unless you can show that it is a personal profit to me or a profit to society at large that I decay, instead of waxing for ever in strength, you must admit that development, progress, success, happiness—cannot be the aim and end of our lot, since there is something in it which these do not account for.

WILFRID.

I notice that you all seem bent on explaining life, or at least finding some scheme, either rational or mystical, according to which it can be viewed as leading to some definite object; in default of which you seem to think it would be a failure.

Now, what do you say to this idea: There are doubtless individual sufferings and individual joys, but the attempt to generalize these data, to reduce the experience of mankind to one straight line, running towards success or failure, can convey no valid teaching, no information on outward realities? Any such attempt has its mainspring in the peculiar mechanism of what we term explaining, and is, like poetry, a deed of speech—in opposition to knowledge.

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HAROLD.

Why do you say "a deed of speech?" And is not all scientific knowledge founded on generalizations and abstractions? If I understand you rightly, you hold that in summing up man's lot, we are dealing with abstract ideas that have no exterior prototypes—handling, as it were, unredeemable paper money. But how do you propose to distinguish such ideas from those which are the very material of science? And supposing this distinction clearly established, where does speech come in? If culprit there be, is not the mind that culprit, and speech simply the interpreter of its errors?

WILFRID.

As for your first question, Harold, viz.: How to distinguish between the data of philosophy and those of science, observe that there may be different degrees of abstraction and different ways of putting them together. Of course chemists, in talking of the properties of oxygen, or naturalists in speaking of vertebrate animals, are to a certain degree treating of fictitious objects, inasmuch as they leave out of account particular qualities without which the general ones they allude to are never met with in reality. But

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immediately behind these fictions, formed for the sake of convenience, stand the many perceptions which, whilst excluding certain others, they sum up, and each of these perceptions contains the work of one of the senses that connect us with the outer world. So that though we have really no such perception as that of oxygen or vertebrate animals, pure of all that is not implied in the terms, yet these symbols are immediately decomposable into facts of sight, touch, weight, and so on, all of which are direct responses to our surroundings and have nothing to do with introspection.

RALPH.

Are you going to establish that introspection is a deed of speech?

WILFRID.

I should like to, but it would take me too long. At present I am trying to answer Harold's question, and to point out a difference between the abstractions that constitute the materials of science and those that philosophers deal with. Now, it seems to me that the former have a degree of complexity that is lacking in the second case, or, if you will, they are nearer to the tissue wherein numberless threads meet to form what

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we call external reality. They are in immediate connection with the hidden dramas of the flesh that lie out of the pale of consciousness.

Of course science is not solely made up of such abstractions; the moment it launches into general theories it becomes analogous to moral philosophy; it is no longer classing individual facts under common notions, it is reconciling different notions by means of some apparently superior one. But just so soon does its character of permanence and certainty abandon it; facts remain and theories pass.

HAROLD.

So you consider the second phase of scientific thought equivalent to the first phase of philosophical research, and class them both as a kind of poetry? Well, now let us hear why the credit or the blame, whichever it may be, of these performances is ascribed to language and not to thought.

WILFRID.

I prefer to use the term "speech" instead of "language," and though the definition may seem arbitrary, let me for the sake of clearness distinguish the two in the following manner. Numbers of things said convey information

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more or less valuable, but which is intended for one reason or another to satisfy us in itself. It relies, to interest us, on previous experiences and on associations which it will awaken by its simple enunciation, without the assistance of any further remark. Take for example a newspaper. In some of its columns you will find many bits of information of the kind I am alluding to: political telegrams, the state of the weather, crimes and accidents, the rate of exchange, fashionable movements, and so forth. In all these cases language serves merely as the interpreter of things that have been previously seen, heard, felt, counted, or measured; of things, in short, that interest us because they represent the play of one of our senses, or of several of them in combined action.

LOTHAIRE.

This is the sensualist theory. You take for granted that all of our interests can be evolved out of the action of our senses.

WILFRID.

Not so, though I think they can go a great way, and I have no doubt Ralph would have a great deal to say in their favour. But to show you that you class me amiss, I have only to go

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on with the same newspaper and ask you to consider the leading article. You will perhaps not find in it a single remark that would interest us were it detached from the surrounding ones, or that could not be met by some counter-proposition equally trustworthy. Yet all the remarks may stand in such a relation one to the other that the entire article becomes a powerful performance capable of stirring public opinion, and possibly of influencing the destinies of the nation. What kind of a performance do you call it?

RALPH.

A logical one, or else a passionate, an emotional one, as the case may be. In either instance I must fall back on some act of the mind, of which language is merely the interpreter, just as with the scrap bits of news you spoke of before.

WILFRID.

That is where we differ. There is in a discourse such as the one we are fancying before us, something that neither logic nor sentiment can account for. It owes its strength to a structure independent of the sentiments it appeals to. It subsists in virtue of an inter-

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dependence of its parts far more subtle than the gross and lifeless connections pointed out by logic. The argumentation might be faultless and the sentiments appealed to most acceptable, and yet the whole thing be inefficient, worse than that —silly. The power there may be in the performance comes neither from knowledge previously acquired by the direct or indirect testimony of our senses as in the case of miscellaneous information, nor from the passions it may arouse, nor from dialectical rigour. . .

RALPH.

Nor from any other mental source ?

WILFRID.

Nor from any other mental source.

RALPH.

Where under the heavens does it come from, then ?

WILFRID.

From an outward source. Either truth is to be got at directly without any concatenation of thoughts, by immediate flashes of intuition, or else any answer we may give to whatsoever question, is, besides the answer that it claims to

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be, part of a situation, it is one of the possible cases of the concatenation of thoughts. And not only is it a case of inward adjustments, I mean not only do the various thoughts it implies hang together in a particular manner; besides that, for it to be intelligible, it must fit one way or another into a previous scheme of thoughts.

RALPH.

Well, what do you argue from that? Surely the logical connection of our thoughts does not destroy the value of their import.

WILFRID.

It just depends on the nature of the subject discussed. It is of little consequence to me how you string your ideas together if all I want from you is some piece of positive information. But what a philosopher undertakes to give us is the most comprehensive scheme of thought possible, in which each thing shall have its allotted place; he does not seek for information, he takes that which special inquirers give him, and tries to make order; the soul of his enterprise is a desire to connect. Now, whatever a thought may contain or express, something goes with it that it cannot possibly impart, to wit: the relation in which it stands to its neighbours. It cannot at

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the same time express a given sum and the interval between that sum and others.

But this relation, this connection, is the very thing philosophers crave for. The very core of their desire is the instinct of something unattainable directly, a formal element connecting all things and not to be identified with any one of them.

This is also the character of a work of art. Can you reduce a poem and bring it down to a formula like a law of mechanics? I don't deny philosophy, or think less of it than any one, but I say it is all poetry and teaches us nothing.

RALPH.

Have you not wandered a little? We wanted to know what you understand by the outward force that you discover in certain speeches.

WILFRID.

It is true I have wandered. I should have made straight for this; disconnected utterances conveying information owe their strength to a previous work of some of our senses, simple or combined, which they translate into words. Connected utterances bearing strength with them owe that strength to the fact that they embody, instead of translating, a primary reality. They

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express nothing, they *are* something. They form part of the stock and riches of the world, even as the organic forms. Far from being products of our mind, that is to say, secondary or manufactured wares like our knowledge, they exist not by us; but we by them. Behold in the connective power which they display, one of the threads which man spins not, but of which he is woven.

For this reason I decline to look upon philosophy as a work of the mind in the same sense as our knowledge may be said to be, and unless some better term be suggested—propose to call it a work of speech, setting speech up as that one of the primary ingredients of the universe that creates all synthetic thinking, and therewith a good part of the world in which we move. And I go so far as to say that I can only conceive the opposition between the mind and the world, the subject and the object, as that of two halves pertaining to a common unity in which alone they exist truly. I would neither get the world out of man's mind nor our mind out of the progressive integration of matter. I would get them both out of speech and say to those who discuss their priority: You are expressing no reality, you are creating one; you are singing after a fashion—go on.

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LOTHAIRE.

This is the doctrine of the Logos: "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God."

RALPH.

Whatever doctrine it may be, it is a very discouraging one. If your are right, all thinking is useless as far as the pursuit of truth is concerned, at least all attempt at a rational and systematic interpretation of things. Nothing remains but miscellaneous information of practical value, and an idle sport that you call poetry. You are even worse off than Lothaire, who at least admits that by faith some sort of general knowledge is accessible.

WILFRID.

I told you from the beginning that I considered the question we started from—"What is the use of living?"—an idle one, neither more so nor less than any other philosophical question. That is to say, a misdirected effort if we hope thereby to get at a faithful representation—which is, I suppose, what we understand by truth. But I do not consider myself badly off for all that. I

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think we overrate the value of representation, we have too high an idea of truth, or rather we extend unduly the boundaries of its domain, and turn something priceless into something worthless, by dragging it into the wrong market. And just as we overrate representation, we underrate, or entirely overlook, a part more important still of our life—its poetry.

LOTHAIRE.

The word needs a comment. I suppose we are to understand by it not an embellishment wrought for pleasure's sake, but a work of creation, with this peculiar qualification, that the creative power resides, as it were, out of us and that we exist partly thanks to our participation in it, even as we exist partly thanks to chemical elements or astronomical bodies without the assistance of which we could not be fashioned. By falling into the circle of action of astronomical forces, chemical forces, and so on, we come into being as a flame kindled at the focus of many rays, and among those rays you count the creative power of speech, of which all general views and efforts of connected thoughts are manifestations. Thus we live partly by poetry, and without it would die.

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WILFRID.

Precisely.

RALPH.

Now, I don't want to set a mere word-trap to you. As you know, I lay small price on those logical catches by which a thinker's position can be shown to be contradictory, for I believe that with a little ingenuity any scheme of thought can be divested of all that gives it worth, and reduced apparently to some conflicting statements, or at least to a statement that cannot be made without assuming for it the benefit of what it denies of others. Yet tell me one thing. What kind of value do you attach to your own doctrine? Is it a work of truth? Then is not its very existence a refutation of the law it propounds?

Or is it a poetical performance? If so, it may be valuable to you and to those whose minds are fashioned like yours, but what authority does it claim over doctrines that have a similar justification? How can it hope to supersede them?

HAROLD.

Yes, let us have an answer to that.

RALPH.

I repeat it, let it be understood that I do not

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attach much importance to the form my objection has taken; its dilemma-like appearance rather weakens it, than otherwise, in my own estimate. Your ideas will stand or fall according to whether they bring with them some new gleams of truth or not; no amount of argumentative proficiency or deficiency will help or injure them. I have taken hold of the first objection that presented itself to my mind, simply because I want to protest, no matter how. Yes, I want to protest. Just now you silenced me all three together, and though I dare say a great deal could be said in behalf of my cause that would protract the discussion indefinitely and give me as good a show as needful, I don't mind confessing that there may be some shortcoming in the scheme of ideas that I advocate. But what of that? Something of it remains that cannot be talked away, the soul of it, as it were, that I feel as a truth and for which as yet I see no recognition in your system, —for such it is in germ at least. And I will tell you at once what I miss in your ideas as far as I understand them; the feeling and the recognition of Law. I listen, and though your thoughts follow paths I am not accustomed to and of which I cannot help being somewhat suspicious, not knowing where they will lead me in the end, I am inclined to think the perception of some truth

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animates you, of which perhaps we men of progress are neglectful. What it exactly is I cannot say—perhaps a subtle sympathy with some unobserved power of nature, the instinct of some overlooked factor in the problem, a more plastic feeling as compared with our plane geometry. I was somehow reminded, as you talked, of the school that looks upon history as an organism of a less material kind, doubtless, than those physiologists study, but yet an organism, and not as an addition of facts which it need but summarize. How far will this hold good? How far is your idea of speech a valid one? It is for you to make out your case, and I will not begin by assuming that it is worthless, but this point I do urge against you: What have you done with the Law?

HAROLD.

He has done away with it, and that is what interests me in his scheme.

RALPH.

Oh, you are an incorrigible Nihilist. But to Wilfrid I would say this: You cannot get rid of the fact that man has an imperious need of law. If he does not accept it as revealed from above, he strives to discover it for himself; if he cannot believe in a Divine will he believes in a plan of nature; he wants to know whither the travail and

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toil of the world tend, and when he has found, or thinks he has found, its grand course, he calls it law, and that which falls in with it is right, and that which crosses it is wrong. We started with this question: Is life worth living? I say yes, to those who believe there is such a law, and that every increase in our knowledge will help us to conform to it. But as for those who have no such faith, nor in its stead the belief in some revealed law, I don't see what is going to lead them—toward what light they can turn their steps, or what they can expect to be in life but shuttlecocks thrown to and fro according to the thump of events or the impulse of the minute.

Now, you come and tell us that there is no scheme of nature, no general movement anywhere, no law; that in talking of them we are not talking of things that are, but bringing forth flowers of speech. We may not even look upon the human mind as the ultimate reality wherein our dream unfolds itself—the human mind itself is a product of speech. Surely this is the final crumbling of everything into dust. I have yet to see how you propose to get along without believing in right and wrong; for you cannot admit them without admitting a general scheme which it is the philosopher's endeavour to understand as well as he can.

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I have also to see how you reconcile the fact that you offer us a system of ideas which I suppose you consider preferable to others with the very tenure of your doctrine, to wit: that all such systems are music, not truths; and how, after upsetting, as so many idols, all our abstract saints and patrons, you would have us accept as a solid, external, and primary reality your newborn and rather startling god—Speech.

WILFRID.

Ah! I have got into trouble?

Well, I don't see how it could be otherwise. If a man's deepest desire is to grasp and to bring into verbal expression something that no one formula can express for the simple reason that you cannot get the entire into one of its parts, it is only natural that he should be led to a doctrine which, when compared with those of other men, seems destructive and contradictory. Such a man, if true to his instinct, contends that wherever you may choose to stop, there is something missing; he spends his life in arguing that there is no use resting the world on an elephant, the elephant on a tortoise, and so on; that there can be no basis, no fulcrum, no starting-point, and no terminus; only a vast complex of many points, none of which can be singled out as the goal

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toward which the others tend, or the source whence they proceed. They are all struggling and turning round and round. Truth itself, however much you may get of it, is but a factor in a larger work, and its greatest value is not in that which it declares, but in that which the declaration is ignorant of, but tends to fashion and form. Whatever you may express, you are at the same time co-operating in the growth of a reality of a quite different kind, you are making something different to what you express. Truth is but a parcel of some becoming reality.

Now, you choose to turn this doctrine against itself, and say that my position is contradictory. I am quite willing to accept the reproof if what it means is that I am not in possession of a principle that can stand of itself, unassisted, and serve as a starting-point for further, and concatenated, speculations. I recollect having often spent hours over the precise question you have raised, with no other result than this: I found that the apparent contradiction was easy enough to solve by means of logical niceties and analyses of propositions; but, unfortunately, these analyses involved others that stood in the same relation to them as they did to the primary difficulty, and as soon as I undertook to grapple with the newcomers, I mastered them, but with the same

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restriction as before; something was left to explain, an ever-retreating, inaccessible remainder. I was falling into the very mistake I had begun by pointing out; I was taking one particular idea as a prime truth, thus cutting it off from the company or concert of its fellows, making a king of it, and at the same time, by working out the consequences which, logically speaking, it was natural to draw from that idea, I was accepting in place of a musical or concerting association, a purely dialectical one. That is my reply to what you yourself called a word-trap.

At first sight this may seem strange and confusing, that only disconnected thought should express truth, and yet that no basis can be assigned to philosophy because no thought can be isolated and stand of itself. But the confusion is only in the vagueness of our usual ideas of connection and association. I am obliged to give the words an arbitrary meaning. The connection I protest against, when I say that only disconnected thought can express truth, is that kind of logical infatuation which leads us to string consequence to consequence, and which, while it thus seems to make ingenious weavers of us, in reality confines us in one mode of thought. There is no good work to be done that way; the more ideas we seem to connect, the further

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away we are getting from the only valuable thing; a complex, many-sided sympathy with the whole; we are pursuing an endless progression of analyses more and more technical, minute, and abstract at each step.

And the kind of association I advocate when I say that no basis can be assigned to philosophy, because no thought can be isolated and stand of itself, is a confederacy, none of the component parts of which can claim authority over the others.

Whoever believes in philosophical truth, is in search, or fancies himself in possession, of some autocratic principle, some one great law—as, for instance, evolution; some one great force—such as Der Wille; some one conception—such as Substance, some supreme being in whom all things are summed up; he believes that all knowledge and all thought converge toward one formula, he believes that all that he can lay hold of with his mind, the physical, the intellectual, the social, the moral world, the universal growth follows one direction—which he can name. This is what I protest against; this work of connection of ideas is valueless, and this supreme principle, whatever it may be, cannot stand in its isolated grandeur. I want a confederacy of equal states, an Olympus without a

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ruler. I look upon our abstract opinions and profound views as personages who step to the front of the stage, say what they have to say, and disappear, to return again according to the working of the plot; the entire drama is in none of them, they come and go, and struggle, and rejoice, and behind them all, or between them, unspoken, unseizable the drama unfolds itself. I hate the very idea of a truth that would sum them all up in one lesson, the more of which we had learned the higher we should rank in class. It is a schoolmaster's idea.

In this sense I am an enemy of the Law you were speaking of just now. There is no great stream with which we must swim or bear the penalty of our folly. There are many streams, and though sometimes one and sometimes another may seem to prevail, they are all eternal. You, Ralph, are greatly enamoured of certain ideas which obtain among many at this hour; but what you look upon as the main stream is to-day's fashion, and what you term vain eddies—the seemingly impotent struggle of the misled—will be to-morrow's or some day's master thought. Nor do I believe there is any real moral want of the Law you speak of. Men at certain hours want particular rules, sometimes perhaps, to guide themselves by, oftener to justify and

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accompany with fine words a line of conduct they are led to by more hidden and complicated motives than they suspect, but never do they stand in need of a vast systematic view which shall co-ordinate and hedge in all their impulses towards a common end. Those who profess to have such a system, hasten to forget it the moment they are thrown into the practical problems of life; their deeds are better than their words. Here again is a question of degrees of abstraction. There are rules and laws, but there is no such thing as the Rule or the Law. What would you say of a man who, observing that several leaves come from one stem, and several stems from one branch, should jump to the conclusion that all the branches in the forest proceed from one trunk, or that all the trees have a common root, and therewith set to working out theoretically the nature and properties of this sacred parent tree or primordial root? Even so the thinker who thirsts after unity. There shall be nothing given him to drink but a mirage of water. That is my answer to one more of your queries.

Again, you say—and this, I think, was your last objection — that in inviting you to look upon all such philosophical speculation no longer as on thought expressing truth, but as

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speech modelling itself into shapes intellectual, somewhat as organic matter may be said to fashion itself into living forms, I am setting up one of the idols that I rail against, a stranger and less acceptable one than your old friends Mind, or Substance, or Will, or Evolution—loving Nature.

Perhaps I am setting up an idol, but there is this to be said in its favour, that it does not claim any kind of supremacy. I think, as I said before, that our great work in life is not translating or expressing truth, but building or fashioning forms. What is our social and political activity else? To these I would assimilate all our speculative efforts. It may be that in the attempt to sum them up and refer them all to the working of a reality as external as any of the physical elements—for such is my view of speech as opposed to the psychical elements it binds together—I err even as those whom I criticize, and am setting up a fiction. You fear that my god of speech is only a false god? Perhaps he is, as soon as I have named him; he certainly would be a false god if I assigned to him an independent position, the self-supporting virtue, and the regal solitude of a supreme principle. But, mark you, he is only a little chieftain. I have no desire to make the world that we look

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at evolve out of speech. I am not talking of the world we see and touch. I am alluding to the world we think about, and I say that when we try to get it out of any mystical egg, be it a nebuleuse, or a primitive cellule, or a law, or a force, or a category, or whatever else you please; further, when in the same spirit we plan out one path which we present as progress, one aim, one ideal, one rule—in short, whenever we strive after the unity of doctrine—at all such times we are misunderstanding the nature and overstepping the boundaries of truth, which must ever be fragmentary; we are led on too far by a new force within us. Unfortunately we do not recognize the newcomer, and do him no honour even when sacrificing everything to him and letting him have it all his own way. We are slaving for a master whom we deny. I believe that at the bottom of all intellectual and moral craving is the desire of something whole and entire, a yearning for the complete and perfect. But, far from reaching it by any systematic connection of ideas, we are shutting ourselves up in the interior history of one of the parties whose exterior relations constitute the real unity; and we only revert to the real game when we step, as it were, out of the web of our doctrine-knit thoughts and refer the whole work to one artful spinner whose name

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expresses one particular factor in the problem whilst his handiwork claims most unlawfully to give us the solution thereof.

Do you see the difference between my idol and yours? You sum up the world, outer and inner, and say: Behold this is the essence or the law thereof, and some of you get mind out of matter, and some of you get matter out of mind. I look at your work, follow it through centuries, see it wax and wane, even as forms of society do, and it strikes me that something is going on that has nothing to do with what you are talking about, something over your heads and greater than you, that sways you hither and thither without your knowing it; all your systems and their very data, down to the opposition of matter and mind, seem to me functions or episodes of the growth of this reality; and what distinguishes it from your idols is that they all proceed one out of another, so that there is one of them which in germ contains them all, and that in it you grasp the cosm, whereas what you term my idol enters into no such system of unification; it remains disjunct as a separate object of study and laying no claim to universality, represents merely one of the many factors of which the great reality is composed. I simply deny the possibility of an all-embracing point of view; I am a polytheist,

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deeming that no expression can be that of the total, and that any great doctrinal unity is a misuse of language.

LOTHAIRE.

Yes, Polytheism is a deep thought; and we shall have to return to it unless we abide by the Christian tenet of a future life where the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

RALPH.

What new voice is this?

LOTHAIRE.

No new voice. Only a sequel to Wilfrid's reflections. But a necessary one, I think, if they are to affect us. Of course it is interesting to discuss whether any systematic view of life can be an expression of truth or is merely, as Wilfrid says, a deed of speech. But after all, if we are to care about it lastingly, the answer to this question must bear on our daily feelings and overshadow our moods.

Is speech a god? and why, it was asked, should we believe in him sooner than in evolution or any unique principle? And the answer was, because he is not unique and claims no supremacy; does not pretend to be the root

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whence all proceeds. And furthermore there came an avowal that I think important. The words were these, or to this purport: "You fear that my god of speech is only an idol. Perhaps he is, as soon as I have named him." I wish I could preach as good a sermon on these words as the text deserves.

WILFRID.

I am very glad they have your approval, but why do they please you so particularly?

LOTHAIRE.

Because I was afraid at one moment that you were going to treat us to a god of speech after the likeness of the vital principle, or of the scholastic universals. I was afraid of some "connecting principle of thought" that would have reminded me of the whiteness which the old realists held to pre-exist in all white things, or the humanity that fashioned human beings.

WILFRID.

No. My gods are not qualities of classes; they are modes, or types, of combination.

LOTHAIRE.

Precisely, and, as I understand you, you hold

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that one of them comprises as part of the factors whose relation constitute him the naming of himself; an idol in his own image. He himself is real and cannot be contained in any one state of consciousness; yet it is part of him that he should be summed up and destroyed by this idolatry which is at the same time his glorification. He reverts on himself by an act which is both a suicide and an apotheosis.

WILFRID.

Even so. Try to express the whole; your expression will be but part of an attempt to cope with the middle in which you are plunged, and this attempt is but one of many. Yet your expression stands there as including them all, so that you can find no other name but it for that of which it is a part.

LOTHAIRE.

And this is, as we said before, the doctrine of the Logos.

HAROLD.

Do you think the Fourth Evangelist thought of this when, sitting down to write the story of the Son of God, he mused: In the beginning was the Word?

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LOTHAIRE.

I suppose so. But never mind the Fourth Evangelist. What I wanted made clear is that you admit in the particular type of combination that all our philosophical efforts go to form, a fictitious element which in this case has the self-reflective character we have mentioned. My sequel to your thought would be that all our other efforts—for instance, our moral and our social efforts—go towards the embodiment of some reality which likewise contains, as a necessary part, some fictitious element, an element of the irrational, even as the contradiction of the preceding case. There is no complete life without some great lie of romance, some dream of love or grandeur, whose value is in its falseness. There is no idealless reality. There is no true world of here below, unless there be, under some form or other, a kingdom of heaven. If you object to it under that name I am willing to find it in the doctrine of modes of grouping or of architectural types, or whatever you please, though I doubt if your way of putting it will be clearer than the old one to the good folk at large.

The all-important thing is that we should not look upon life as on a journey over tracts of land, some safe, some dangerous, and some fatal, so

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that a map can be made of the roads that lead to success, and that they who stray from them are reputed lost. Assuredly any such success is vanity, and whatever goal be pointed out the words of the Ecclesiast will reach it before us: This also is vexation of spirit. Supposing even that it were not so, and that what Ralph termed just now obedience to the Law, gave, as it may do to some, a security beyond the blight of doubt, what of the disobedient, what of the outcast, what of the weaker ones? for your one law, frame it as you will, will always be the gospel of the survival of the fittest. It will always be in favour of those who are wise or lucky enough to observe its ordinances. It will always be the voice of a party. How in the name of a party can you speak for the nation? If you do so, you are a party no more. If you propound to us the law of life, it must be a law against which there can be no transgressors. Now, if everything is reducible to one scheme, there is also one measure by which all our thoughts, feelings, and deeds can be measured, the measure of conformity, and they can have or lack but one kind of value, that of faithful representations in the case of ideas, that of fitness or adaptation to the law in the case of efforts.

As soon as we adopt this view of life, we judge things by their immediate connections, by the

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place which they assume in the great procession of victory or the repulsed tide of defeat. There is no appeal from sorrow, such as religion taught us to seek in another world; there is no appeal from joy, no way of looking on it as aught but an ultimate and self-sufficient fact. Can you stomach such joy? I cannot.

I believe that the outward and inner events of our life would not have in our eyes one simple exhaustive value if we were not duped by the belief in one grand scheme according to which they must be classified.

Of course there are relatively few people who trouble themselves with any very abstract views, but the same tendency can be expressed under many different forms: a limited sphere of interests is to one man what a system of philosophy is to another—his full range, and whereever we find this range brought under one law, there also we find a simple and definite value assigned to the points it embraces. There are men who reduce everything to a question of dollars, others whose ruling passion is vanity and whose standard is social success, moral bigots who would make duty odious, and voluptuaries who admit no other test than pleasure; all of these have summed up life and reduced it to one straight line; whatever happens to them takes its assigned

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place in their scheme and has nothing more to say for itself than what it bears on its face. Each one of their actions, feelings, or thoughts, is a personal performance, subject to no other possible criterion than the amount of success it brings to the performer. The whole game is played on one surface, and there are but two players in presence : the plan of the universe and I. What if I lose ? Why ! you have done away with heaven, but you let an eternal process of damnation go on.

RALPH.

And what have you to offer us ?

LOTHAIRE.

Nay, it is not my idea, it is Wilfrid's, that I have taken up, and that seemed to me susceptible of a wider bearing than the particular case he wished to establish. For my part I care more for feelings than for ideas, and could quickly accept any old-fashioned notions, provided they cloak a comely body of live sympathies and delicate instincts. I will agree with anyone who will give me, under whatsoever form, the equivalent for a kingdom of heaven, and for the gentle confidence expressed in the old words : There is not a sparrow falls from the sky but what your father knows it. It is all costume and drapery,

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this grand look of logical necessity that we throw over the shape of our desires. I was only trying to fold a new robe round old feelings, since you and so many to-day are weary of their homely garb. And Wilfrid having made what seemed to me a successful charge against the doctrine of Unity, indeed, having worked us back to Polytheism, it occurred to me that one might find there a new way of expressing the subtle truth conveyed, crudely if you will, by the promise of a future life and the faith in providence.

For the precious secret contained therein is only the perception of a double value in what before seemed to us simple; with this increased delicacy of perception comes a serenity that takes away the sting from sorrow and the coarseness from joy.

This duplicity or, if you fear the odium generally attached to the word, this dualism of feeling is our nearest approach to the great secret, our only true communion with reality. It is the root of all power: that of the artist who, where other men are simply moved, discovers the springs, and thereby learns how to move us; that of the scientist who weighs or dissects what other men only wonder at; that of the statesman who makes use of other men's ideas and passions as of figures on a chess-board; that of the man of

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will who masters himself; that of the religious man who forgives life, because whatever it may bring him—be it joy or sorrow, triumph or shame —has an entirely other meaning on another record, which, if he is of an unsophisticated, gentle mind, he calls his father's will. What does the name matter?

Now, if instead of one universal scheme we admit a plurality of eternal organisms manifesting themselves by our agency, our actions of every kind acquire besides their working or material value, a formal one. Whatever may be their merits as far as what they do is concerned, they are sacred in this: they *are*. The unity of scheme reduces all things to one design, and all men to winners or losers according as they do or do not fit in, on the whole, with this design. Given a plurality of schemes, there is no inward or outward event of our lives but what has its value as the realization of some part of some eternal design.

I don't suppose this change is owing to a difference in the number of gods we look up to; it is owing to our enriched feeling of a formal or syntactic value in all that we do, which feeling excludes the infatuation, the coarseness of perception, and the consequent individualism that lie at the root of all our attempts at unification.

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HAROLD.

One thing I wonder at greatly: our moral state is in your eyes the greatest consideration, and you look to our inner life for an answer to my question—What is the use of living?

LOTHAIRE.

I do.

HAROLD.

I was called a Nihilist a little while since. If we are to lable each other with such simple names, I suppose I shall have to call you a mystic. Wilfrid I cannot exactly make out; sometimes his teaching seems to me the pure doctrine of speech, and I expect him to conclude that there is no use thinking at all—that it is all talk; and at other moments it would seem to me as though he rose above this conclusion, looked upon it as an episode in his performance and were at heart an architect of abstractions. As for Ralph—well, let us say nothing about him; he is one of those men whose ideas one meets with in books. Yet I do not know if on the whole I would not prefer his tendency of thought to yours. You, both of you, have shut yourselves up in the intellectual or psychical

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world. Wilfrid, who pleads so strongly the cause of external realities, and you who are so severe against egotism, you seem alike to have forgotten that you are living in a world made up not only of sensations and ideas, but also of men and women whose beliefs—no matter what they ought to be—form tremendous currents outside of which all thinking is an ingenious, elegant, and fruitless pastime. Now, Ralph swims with one of these currents; indeed, with the strongest of them, as far as I know, and it is a current that must lead him to practical results. Any man with a philosophy such as his, is bound to, and in fact does, take part in the struggle of moral and political tendencies that influence our social state. Compared to you two, he is superficial, and his thoughts seem of a less delicate grain, but possibly they have the advantage of expressing only part of a nature more complex than yours because it admits of instincts and prompts efforts that have nothing to do with intellectual perfection.

The question I put to you in the beginning, Wilfrid has quietly put aside as unreasonable, and you, Lothaire, have in a manner answered it by interpreting, according to your own heart, Wilfrid's arguments and conclusions. One of you has opened to me interesting vistas of

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thought; the other has reminded me of the importance of moral purity—I mean the delicacy of our inward perceptions, and has told me where I can seek for it. I am grateful to you both; you have received me kindly, shown me fine pictures, and cheered me with sweet music. But you have forgotten one thing: you have forgotten to feed me, and I confess I am hungry. I cannot live on subtile ideas and exquisites states of mind; I need some coarser food; I should starve on your abstract speculations and psychological niceties. I want thought that will rouse my passions and throw me as a combatant among men. What was that Wilfrid was saying about the fruitlessness of defending logically each step of our thought because the defence involved new positions that would, in their turn, require justification, and how we must leave all this hair-splitting, and seek the strength of our ideas not in the way they derive one out of another, but in the team they form together—I don't recollect his words, but they struck me as very true. Well, I would apply them on a broader scale. Your team won't pull anything except, perhaps, the nine muses, or the divine Logos, or the third person of the Trinity, who is said to be the comforter. It is altogether too ethereal. You have forgotten the shaft-horse;

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you cannot pull through roads of clay; you can only drive, like Aurora, far away at the horizon, between the fathomless sea and the infinite sky. What is the use of telling us how it is wise to think and how it is right to feel? Who ever listened to such words? If your teaching is to be heard it must have echoes so loud that the deaf themselves will hark; it must sound as the falling-off of chains. If it is worth anything it must have been formed in you from all the sources of life; it is not enough that it should light in your eyes the ray of far-searching thought, or cast on your head a halo of peace like the haze of fresh morning hours; it must also have sent your blood coursing through your veins and knit your muscles for fight. Give me the thought that makes its way through metaphysical ether and moral atmosphere down on to the hard soil where it takes its place among practical interests and grapples with social facts. Now, whatever may be the value of Ralph's ideas, they lead to a sociological doctrine; there is fight in them, and for this I honour him, though I cannot side with him; whereas your ideas stir in me many approving voices and vague sympathies. But you do not carry them far enough; you are, both of you, specialists. There is in his nature an element, missing in yours, that brings him into

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a game you know nothing of; he is subjected to a force which fashions the social structure. There is impersonalism in that; it is a way of submitting one's self to a superior reality. The man who can enter into the social structure and work for it is, in spite of himself, free from the sin of unification; whatever he may feel, he behaves as an instrument in an orchestra. Our present social adjustments require men so made that all that comes into the field of their consciousness should be subject to dogmatic appreciation. Each one of them asserts himself to be right and would have everyone like him. But this very error makes him a member of a higher organism. He is absolute in his views, and though many moods may pass over him, he can tell you which is the best, he can point out truth; thanks to which he can pursue one course, stick to one calling, belong to one class.

This is an important question: the size and nature of the group to which a term must be referred for its justification. Suppose me to be fully aware of the impossibility of getting a complete, a fundamental truth into any one state of consciousness, so that no thought or feeling of mine can assume command, but they all succeed each other with equal claim to my respect because together they form a complete structure—then

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I am doubtless a perfect man inwardly. But I am a solitary being as far as the social commonwealth is concerned, for there is no dogmatism of any kind, intellectual or moral, left in me, and a good riddance it is with respect to my communion with Psyche; but, with the error I have avoided, the conditions of persistent, limited, and effective work are gone—the blindness, the unconsciousness that would have assigned me an allotted place and thanks to which I should have represented one of the functions of society. Being a world of myself, I stand alone. And this solitude is poverty. Something is dead in me that lives in those who are not only psychical but also social beings. On the other hand, their thinking will be as far inferior to mine as an amateur's performance is to a professional man's.

LOTHAIRE.

I do not recognize your usual voice. If you had always spoken so among us you would not have been called a Nihilist.

HAROLD.

Ah! but wait a minute; for shall we not rather say that this solitude of mine exists only in my feelings and in the visible character of my relations to society, but that in reality a man can

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never step out of humanity; however little in harmony with his immediate surroundings he may feel, he cannot do otherwise than take his part in a higher unity. Do you see what this leads us to? That there is an opposition between the social fabric, which is the work of individuals in whom thought is but a factor, and who consequently are dogmatic, and some larger work at which all must perforce labour, and wherein those individuals in whom thought is all-absorbing, tyrannic, have a part to play precisely in virtue of their antagonism to dogma, that is to say, to law. Human sympathy awakes in them as soon as they become destroyers of society. Thought begins in doubt and ends in revolution. Its essence is revolt.

RALPH.

Surely this is extravagance.

HAROLD.

To your mind, doubtless. You are saturated by civilization. You are serenely confident that if a man has been a good son, a good husband, a good father, a good worker, and a good citizen, he may rest in peace; there is nothing more to be asked; he has been happy and done his duty. You seem convinced that a

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man owes it to society to be happy, or at least successful.

But there is in us a spirit which you persistently forget; a spirit of rebellion that cries out against this gregarious ideal; we are not solely social animals whose efforts are to conspire with those of our fellow-creatures to the general good; we sicken on the philosophy of duty and happiness.

RALPH.

Well, if you wish to be alone, you can withdraw into the solitude of philosophical thought, and, if you want misery, take the share of it that comes to you and retire with it to your chamber of religious meditation. You have free range within your own hearts; but as soon as practical interests and social institutions are at stake, you must submit to the fact that when men gather together, it is to pull together, with the hope of some benefit. There doubtless arises competition, and there are individual victims, but the progress we strive to forward tends to improving their lot and to reconciling the good of all with that of each. How you can talk of developing sympathy with humanity by destroying the bonds which unite men in social aggregates, I am at a loss to under-

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stand. I can understand how Wilfrid has been led to take what seems to me a sceptical and dangerous position; be it what it may, it is purely theoretical, and possibly there is something to be got out of it; if he can some other evening show us that his way of viewing speech leads to some critical and objective science of which philosophers and their systems are the subject-matter, I will listen to him with deference, esteeming that, whatever his premises may be, he is working in the direction my instinct tells me to be true; he will be adding to our stock of knowledge.

Or if he works in another line, and restores to philosophy the charm in poetry, I will read him with pleasure.

Lothaire, also, I can follow to a certain extent. He spoke to us of a law against which there can be no transgressors; but, to find it, he takes us back into a land of mystical feelings which borders upon the kingdom of heaven — and possibly we need some such outlook for our dreams.

But you, Harold, have brought these dreams forward into a world where they are out of place. Keep back the spirit of revolt you speak of, within the limits of solitary thought and silence. Something I can feel astir within me

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that responds to your voice; some strange, ever-repressed feeling of which I know not what to say except that it was that, I suppose, that in the minds of the olden poets crowned with majestic gloom God's fallen enemy; a sudden stinging misgiving that we are doing injustice to Evil, and that we remain half-grown, timorous, reliant on our leading-strings until we rebel against the law and seek the truth in ourselves. But, believe me, these are suggestions that we cannot listen to in practical life. Our first requirements there are confidence, good faith, principles we can rely on and know to be of the same value to others as they are to us, laws which we recognize in common. Great enough already is the mischief done by that link-destroying, isolating spirit you invoke; great enough the work of dissolution. Behold it in egotism and deceit between individuals; behold it in war between nations. The devil needs no lawyer to plead his interests, he helps himself. What if there is in our nature a principle of discord that we never can entirely suppress? Is that a reason to glorify its work?

Whosoever refuses to take a place in organized society is, and must remain, an outcast. Will you declare war in the name of the tramps against the workers?

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You say that some men have no true social instinct, and that in them thought unadulterated by other interests attains its perfection; they form in your eyes an intellectual aristocracy, and just as we have sometimes seen in history the alliance of the highest with the very lowest classes, you seem to think that it is your mission to take the part of those who stand outside of society because they are not capable of entering into it, and who hate it as the savage hates what he cannot understand. You are one of those men who reason themselves into crime. Granted that a great deal of thinking leads us to deny the value of any dogmatic assertion otherwise than as an episodic performance, neither better nor worse than any other, and thus unqualifies us for social life, with its fixed moral and economical positions—that would only prove that a great deal of thinking is too much, and that we had better content ourselves with less. There is no better sign of maturity in a man than the discretion that checks him in every direction before extreme consequences; teaches him to discriminate between values of a different order, and saves him from trying to govern his practical life by moods that should be pushed no further than mere verbal expression—if indeed thus far, and if not best kept silent. But you take a

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particular state of mental anarchy produced by an excess of solitary thinking, and say to us: Behold! I cannot join in with other men and take part in the work they have patiently toiled at for thousands of years, but I will look upon this very incapacity as a most valuable contribution to some other work directly opposed to their social constructiveness, a higher and more catholic work which their worldliness makes them forget—so that I shall be right and they shall be wrong, and that the true bond between men shall turn out to be the destruction of the beliefs and institutions that hold them together.

You are dreaming a bad dream. Wake up and go out amongst men. You will find that these people you look down upon as superficial and simple minded have more weight than yourself; you will find out that your battle-axe is a child's rattle; you may strike—they will only smile. But you will not even strike, you will be borne along with them and fall into pace as a roadside traveller with the steady tread of an army in march. You will feel the pressure of the mighty truth that keeps their ranks compact and urges them forward in the direction of what you contemptuously call civilization. And given that start, all the rest will follow as the parts of a natural growth; you will see that men can

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believe in an end worth striving for, can trust in progress, wish for happiness—aye! and resign themselves to being, as you term it, good sons, good husbands, good fathers, good workers, and good citizens, without deserving the name of shallow fools which you seem ready to confer on all those who can content themselves with such paltry joys.

HAROLD.

By no means. They have one work to do and I another. Did not Wilfrid tell us there are many gods?

You invite me to awaken from my dreams and feel the pressure of the force that drives men together and moulds them into social forms marked out by laws, beliefs, and customs.

I have felt it. I have heard the tread of your legions, and have been carried along in step. I have felt myself weaker before them than a child with a rattle—a mere straw blown aside by the rush of air on their path. And the straw sat down and watched them and saw, to his great surprise, that the world was not moving with them, but quietly turning on its axis regardless of their impetus; whence he concluded that there was somewhere a greater force than theirs.

It is not true that the highest aim and end of

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the individual is happiness and success, whether for himself or for others; it is not true that the aim and end of a social body is its maintenance and progress, or the furthering of civilization. There is something higher than that in us; something that must force its way into our consciousness, and not only into our thoughts, but into our will, so that we work with it and for it, if we are to respond fully and as brave instruments none of whose chords are slack, to the touch of destiny stretching over us its fingers of life and death.

In your eyes, I am the advocate of certain tendencies of our nature that should lead—if to anything—only to religious moods or to speculative investigations; the moment they influence our dealings with our fellow-creatures you condemn them unhesitatingly as forms of evil.

I deny that the realm of practical activity must by right belong to you and yours exclusively, and I deny that it does so in fact. There is no such thing as drawing lines between what is good in thought and what is good in action—here ends the psychical and here begins the practical. States of mind are political parties in germ; it is idle to make a class of certain of them that you would check in their growth and condemn to perpetual embryonic confinement. They leap

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forth in spite of you, and then you know not what to say of them; you call them disasters, cataclysms, trials that must not shake our faith in better times; you try to forget them, will not look them in the face. Put a difficult question to a little boy, he will behave just so, look puzzled and distressed for a moment, then shake it off and return to his top, which he understands. I am not aware that death has any place in your scheme, or that you have anything more edifying to say about it than that—"there is no use complaining, because it is the law of nature; first up hill, and then down, but if you please we will not talk about the descent, we will confine our attention to the ascent; it is all a glorious ascent if you will only look at it the right way; to be sure, individually we have an obstinate trick of slipping backwards through old age into the tomb, but bother individuals, look at the species, is not that progressing? Have we not just invented a lot of new toys, and what if wars and revolutions, and such like, do every now and then come and upset our work, it is only for awhile, we begin again, and surely we are far ahead of the Greeks and Romans, and better off than they, unless, indeed, they were better off than we are, which there is no knowing, so it is all right, and cheer up." You have got back to your top.

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I say that partially, at least, any man has made a failure of his life, who cannot look upon death as a victory, the last achievement of a long series of efforts no less precious in his eyes than those by which he has lived. From our earliest days the work of destruction begins in us, scattering illusions, shaking beliefs, wearing out affections, breaking bonds, gaining step by step in materiality, till it sinks into our tissues to destroy them. And the brave man is he who does not shirk the disenchantment, nor the doubt, nor the sorrow, aye, and perchance the crime, but accepts all this as part of his task. He will not cling to happiness, he will not be dismayed by ruin, he will not fear death—it plays into his hands, for the soul of tragedy is in him; and so true is it that unless this chord resound within us we are but half-awake, that no memories are eternally interwoven save of those whom tragedy has parted, no fates have been forever commingled, but by the blood of battle-fields or the sweat of silent agony.

It would seem as though history could only be woven at the places and hours where some precious life-tissue is torn in shreds, some web of dreams, some robe of innocence, some sacred banner or temple-veil.

What a poor godhead is that in which no

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place is reserved for the holy ghost of destruction! How incomplete and weak and becoming only to women of tender, graceful natures, the soul that peace can satisfy and the ways of goodness detain. And even so, how miserably poor the destines of Arcadian commonwealths. Would you have the world's annals like unto those of the republic of Andorra?

You have mentioned egotism as one of the forms under which the destructive spirit manifests itself, and there is no doubt that a high intelligence of, or a delicate sympathy for, man's social skill and its work, supposes generous feelings; whereas the lack of such intelligence often accompanies the poverty of a selfish nature. But give a man a high intelligence of any kind, and it will lift him above the level of personal interests as surely as the most genuine public spiritedness. Nobody would call Archimedes selfish because he went on working at his problem whilst the city walls were being stormed. I know what you are going to say: "We are not talking of men engrossed by some talent." Well then, Francis of Assisi; he was no genius. Would you call him selfish? Yet his teaching was so destructive of society that it would not be tolerated to-day. The very ministers of Jesus, or those who give themselves that name, would

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shout into prison a villain who urged men not to work but to beg.

RALPH.

Religious fanatics are not to be judged by the same standard as other men. What is good and great in them, must be ascribed to the religious feeling that inspires them, not to the destructive character their ideas may assume when carried beyond their due limits into practical life. Christianity has lasted two thousand years, and yet all the time we have gone on giving heed to the morrow, and devoting no little attention to food and raiment.

HAROLD.

Ah! you picture to yourself philanthropists whose tender sympathy for suffering blinds them to economical laws and unfits them for practical life—men of sentiment. You see the profit of their work in a revival of delicate feelings which are so much added to our wealth, if we knew how to keep them within proper bounds. I see it in a protest against incomplete reality. It is not their love of mankind that leads them to forget part of reality and assume towards social institutions a hostile attitude; it is the spirit of destruction that calls on them to represent him

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against the great social party that has forgotten him and mutilates reality by thinking that its supreme law is welfare. They come not to bring peace, but the sword. Those are admirable words, and because the instinct that prompts them is both as deep and universal as that which makes of each man something of a peace-loving legislator, deeper, perhaps, and at the same time of easier access to the simple minded, for that reason it leads us to the true love of mankind; not a sentimental pity for those who are unfortunate, unreasonable, uninformed; but an outright revolt with and for the outcasts. I have in view the moral outcasts as well as the starving. There are millions of men and women to-day who are morally starving, because they are not at their true work, and know not where to find it. Food in plenty is set before them, but it will not feed them. The entire system of ideas under which we live, is a lie to them. Their truest, happiest, most self-forgetting instincts, they are taught to be ashamed of. Duties are set before them, and ideals held up to their admiration, which they can only conform to at the cost of sincerity, and if they attempt to lay aside hypocrisy and step forward free and ingenuous as God made them, such a storm of opprobrium greets them that their light-hearted innocence is

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gone, and they recognize themselves no more. Our social institutions require dogmatic convictions and dogmatic characters; our forms of property and family can suit but such. And the care that bears so heavily on many of those to whom these forms are not suited, is that they see no way of stepping out of them without falling into the degraded condition of an adventurer who understands nothing but his own personal interests. There is as generous an impulse and as true a feeling of a high, unselfish cause to defend among the enemies as among the friends of the law. Can you marvel that they should begin to count each other, that from all ranks, all countries, they should gradually muster together; men of various aptitudes, of various grievances, and various hopes, but all of them one at heart in this: emancipation—which, I believe, you call Anarchy or Nihilism?

Do shut that window, Lothaire, if you have done looking out at the church towers. The grey of morning is coming on, and it is cold.

LOTHAIRE.

Yes, dawn is coming, as it will do, I suppose, a thousand years hence, whatever we may decide. I have just heard a cock crow off yonder; it is time for the ghosts to separate.

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WILFRID.

What if they cannot ?

RALPH.

How? Has a witch come and carried us off while we were engrossed in conversation, and locked us up in a tower ?

WILFRID.

Worse than that; chained us together and thrown us into one body ; there he passes in the street, muffled up in his cloak. Or—look ! that is he, seated at the table in the room opposite, where you see that lamp growing pale. You will meet him everywhere. His image it is that swings on the sign-board we found Harold gazing at. . . And we, my friends, what are we ? Big shadows of forms that move in his and every mind, and that, taken altogether, are only a very small part of the performers who throng the stage. We have talked as ingeniously as one generally does, about how man ought to view life. Well, suppose we had found an answer that all could agree to ; where would it be an hour hence, and of what use to us or to anyone ? Should we not forget it all to go to sleep, or to drink another glass of wine, as I do

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here, or to think about business, as I trust I never may, or to call for music, as I suggest we should?

RALPH.

Of course; but, none the less, we should find security in knowing that there is a law.

HAROLD.

Or strength in feeling that we have to destroy it.

LOTHAIRE.

Or peace in looking beyond it.

WILFRID.

Come, let us have music.

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PART II.

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PART II.

RALPH.

I HAVE been thinking over our recent conversation. One very clear impression I will speak of at once. It is a point on which I believe we shall all agree: abstract philosophy—the discussion of mere ideas without reference to the character and passions peculiar to those who defend a given doctrine—is an ingenious but more or less frivolous pastime. The real struggle is not between ideas, but between temperaments.

LOTHAIRE.

I think so too. If there were assembled in a room representatives of all the different philosophical schools, the story of their debate would be nothing but the records of an academy; but an assembly of men representing all the chief temperaments would be a miniature humanity.

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RALPH.

Yes. We can leave aside all the school arguments by which fundamental positions are defended or attacked, and direct our attention to the moral and social bearings of our opinions. Our habitual tone of feeling and the line of action we strike out; these are the questions at issue. It is on these grounds that I wish to quarrel with you, Harold. But just let me see if I rightly apprehend you.

You contend, if I am not mistaken, that our philosophy of life is worthless, precisely because it is a philosophy of life, and not a philosophy of life and death. We are accused, we modern men, of overlooking one of the factors of reality, —something that we occasionally advert to under such names as dissolution, or destruction, but that we practically leave out of account in our reckonings.

HAROLD.

Even so.

RALPH.

Very well. The next thing we hear from you, however, is that this said principle, unjustly neglected in our speculations, is the agent of a

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work superior to that of the opposed principle for which we have neglected it. We learn that to build is well enough in its way, and that builders are the makers of society, but that to destroy is far better, and that destroyers are the makers of history. Their work is, in your eyes, the manifestation of an instinct so deep that, when it finds its true expression, it raises men above their individual interests higher than social sympathy can. For instance, the genuine spirit of religious movements, be they of Christ, or of Buddha, is certainly opposed to the very first, I mean the economical, interests of society. This opposition you do not attribute to an excessive concern for spiritual interests dragging those over whom it obtains command beyond the limits of practical utility; on the contrary, you look upon the opposition in question as the very source whence flows true sympathy for mankind. Out of the revolt comes the love. Have I stated your opinions correctly?

HAROLD.

Quite correctly.

RALPH.

Then, hear my perplexities. I will grant that the theory of progress is at fault on the ground

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that there is, and always will be, in the single or collective destinies of men, something that it does not account for.

Now, I can understand the position taken by a frank dualist who recognizes two opposed principles, and imputing all error, sin, and unhappiness to one of them, bids us hate that one as the Evil One. It may be an unkind appreciation of the contender, but it is a very clear one. He is located.

But you first establish that all that we consider good and desirable is only one of the antagonistic terms of reality; and then, by a strange twist of thought, you make out that the forgotten antagonist for whom you plead has all the qualities that endeared his rival to us, and has them in a higher degree. The dualism has gone, and we revert to a peculiar form of the doctrine of the one, in which the conclusions of a pessimist are presented to us with a glow of optimistic enthusiasm.

WILFRID.

Wait a minute. I shall be very glad to see the discussion brought on to practical grounds. But you have begun by raising a logical difficulty which I would like to notice before it slips from our attention. Will you let me speak first?

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RALPH.

With pleasure.

WILFRID.

You say that there is something contradictory in the attempt to legitimate two opposed principles. Your text is—Ye cannot serve both God and Mammon. The difficulty apparently being this, that if we sum up under the name of the first all that we approve of, we must either hate the second, or look upon it merely as a new manifestation of the former, in which case it is evident that we had not done what we intended; we had not summed up, under the name of the first principle, all that we approve of; and consequently the opposition disappears. In other words, you only admit of two tenable theories: Firstly, an irreductable dualism, that of Good and Evil, in which case we must abhor the latter; secondly, monism, whether that of optimists or that of pessimists. We may worship the Evil One if we deny the Lord; also if we look upon them as helping one another; but then they are not what their names imply. In no case can we worship them both if they are antagonists.

And as Harold has quarrelled with the monistic view precisely because it disregards the

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contending principle, he is placed somewhat in the position of a man who might say: I take part for the under dog in the fight, because there must be an under one, and, what is more, I maintain that he is the upper one.

RALPH.

Exactly.

WILFRID.

Have you ever seen a conjurer take a ball in his hands and gently rub it between them? As he rubs, the ball seems to diminish in size, and finally it disappears. Now suppose this world to be treated in the same manner under our feet, and suppose that you and I were standing at the antipodes when the performance begins, so that the soles of our feet would meet when it is over. All your weight is bearing upon me, and all my weight is bearing upon you. Who is the under dog?

RALPH.

I really cannot say.

WILFRID.

Nor can I. What we might say is that the case is not likely to present itself, and that if the

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substance of the world were to go, ours would go with it.

Yet, in our own logical performances, we are continually playing this trick upon each other and crying ha! ha! We conjure away the substance of our thoughts so that nothing remains of them but two antithetical principles that look at each other in perplexity, till one of them says: "I have it; one of us is above and the other below; I am above." "You are mistaken," answers the other, "and doubly mistaken. You are not above, nor yet are you below. Contradiction is the essence of unity, and we twain are one."

One or two, what difference does it make? The situation is a fictitious one, a quarrel between ghosts who strike at each other and hit nothing. The solid bodies and all the complex conditions of their reality have long since passed away, but the shadows linger on the wall and quarrel for precedence, or wonder which of them engendered the other.

RALPH.

This is true enough. But if you sweep away my objection as a merely verbal one, you must stand by me when I say that Harold's opinions proceed from a misuse of speech. He goes on

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talking when he ought to do something else. That which he accuses us of always neglecting in our philosophies is that which cannot be put directly into words; it is the antithesis of thought; it is action. As soon as we try to convert it into thought its character of contrary term forces us to present it as the spirit that always denies. All our previous work of thought has been in the behalf of order. We have taken part for that which can be legitimated against that which cannot, but now the work is inverted; we are still bound by the nature of the instrument we make use of to legitimate; but what we legitimate is destruction, and the longer we think, the further our negations extend.

Is this the proper use to put thought to? I say No. It is the revenge of the inactive. The force that should have lifted their arms has lingered in their brain and turned to denial. This is the race of dreamers. And there is something here far more serious than a denial of Law considered in its intellectual aspect as the expression of unity. There is a denial of its equivalent in our practical life—a blasphemy against joy. It is the death of all endeavour. If I point out that a given course leads to misery, and you quietly answer: "What of that? misery is of God"—of course I am

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silenced, but so too are you. You have refused to accept a postulate which the exchange of ideas supposes. Where there is nothing to strive for and nothing to avoid, counsel ceases.

Let us admit that you are vindicating some superior right. To do it you have to go down to those depths of analysis at which the value of reason is in question. It is of course possible to suspect as fallacious the entire fabric of consciousness, and you may say: Why not? But if we are agreed that such abstract questions are sterile, I must judge your opinions by the effect they would probably have if listened to, and in that case I shall not let myself be blinded by any glow of religious grandeur you may throw over them. We are told that the leader of the Huns entitled himself the Scourge of God; and possibly he is your man. But the Vandals who followed Genseric saw no sacred mission in destruction, they merely sought for riot. Beware lest Attila call and Genseric be answered.

WILFRID.

I do not think your argument is quite fair.

RALPH.

How so?

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WILFRID.

You begin by advising that we should limit ourselves to practical considerations and avoid discussing abstract ideas; but you take Harold's in their extreme phase, at the moment of their last theoretical import, and ask how they can possibly work at the ordinary level. He might retort in the same manner and show that your ideas, when pushed far enough, lead to views by which our daily conduct cannot be governed.

Our ideas have different phases of development and pass also through different regions. They must at all times be judged according to their behaviour in the region pertinent to the phase at which we consider them.

RALPH.

I was told the other evening that thoughts were made to be converted into actions, and that it was not possible to draw a line between theory and practice.

WILFRID.

It is not possible to divide our mind into currents, some of which are only to flow in dreamland. We cannot say to a tree: You shall have roots, but that is all; your life must

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be entirely subterranean. Or: You may have boughs that wave about high up in the air, but you are not entitled to a trunk.

HAROLD.

Exactly; and it was in this sense that I refused to admit that my line of mind-work was not to cross the boundaries of practical life. It must, and does, cross them; but that is no reason to suppose that I shall answer every-day questions with the trump of the Last Judgment. If you, Ralph, point out to me that a given course leads to confusion and distress, I shall not quietly answer: "Well, my friend, what of that? Suffering is of God." For I may be merely trying to put on my waistcoat backwards forwards, and the powers of above take no interest in the peformance. I shall try to amend my course and not blaspheme against joy. I am as free to love joy as you are; though probably there will be some unnoticed difference in our manner of feeling it. I may be as eager for action as you, though doubtless it will not be for the same ends. The glaring contrast of our theoretical conclusions is no proof that all our lives through I shall shake my head while you nod assent, and that we have naught in common; it is simply a sign of some difference in our

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most intimate tissues, that will bring us into direct opposition only when the depths are stirred—and at such moments we may indeed disagree as to where reality lies; the rest of the time it will reveal itself in the different expressions we give to the same desires.

If I could get nothing out of myself but a hymn to Sheeva, after which I crossed my arms and declared that there is nothing to be avoided and nothing to be striven for, I think you would be quite justified in calling my philosophy the revenge of the dreamer. I should be taking final thoughts for a permanent rule whereby my conduct is everywhere to be governed, instead of looking on them as ultimate expressions applicable only to ultimate problems. Other problems I will meet with other answers, and one same temperament will, of course, underlie them all, but they will be worked out of it like distinct and complementary functions of an organism; not like propositions out of an axiom, as your criticism implies.

This is a mistake into which you men of the Law are always falling. You want a formula out of which all others can be spun; a supreme principle whence authority flows. Wherever, and under whatever form, I meet this despot, he is my enemy. If you think that at least on

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practical grounds he is invulnerable, and that the principle of morality must be bowed down to, you are mistaken. What you look upon as the necessary safeguard of men, I consider the source of the greatest harm among them.

RALPH.

Do you assert in good earnest that there is neither Right nor Wrong?

HAROLD.

I do not deny that at every moment there is something to be striven after and something to be avoided; some thought, feeling, or deed, failing which we shall be unequal to the situation. What I do deny is that the proper course can be pointed out by assigning fixed qualities to actions or states of mind. This is precisely what is done under the name of morality, and it is morality thus understood that I consider a pernicious fallacy.

RALPH.

In everybody but fanatics, common sense corrects the exaggeration to which the acceptance of a permanent Law might lead. I know that we may become enslaved by forms, and that there is a danger of moral inertia. But the practice of life knocks it out of us; and we finish by not

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looking too closely at the letter without, for all that, denying the spirit.

HAROLD.

You are tainted by worldly wisdom. The genuine moralist will bid us observe unswervingly the law. That which you cavalierly put aside as formalism, he will call a delicate conscience of sin. He makes a virtue of routine. His claim is that we must act by principle; to do which we must attribute an unvarying value to our actions, and always cling to the same qualities as though they had at all times the same meaning. His very first step is the sacrilegious attempt to prevent us feeling that the parts which make up the machinery of our life are subject to a delicate and incessant shifting, so that the performance allotted at a given moment to a given part will, at another moment, devolve on a different one whose function has, perhaps, been hitherto directly opposite. What does the experience of life teach us? what do we learn by watching many men, seeing many countries, tasting of many events, sweet and bitter? Just this: that the way we thought right was only one of many ways that lead to the same end; the ideas we thought necessary to the working of private or public economy, can be replaced without dis-

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advantage by quite different or contrary ideas; the customs we deemed sacred are local fashions; the conditions without which we fancied life unbearable, can make way to conditions no less rich in vital stuff. From beginning to end, our history, if we have any, is one of emancipation from the tyranny of forms.

RALPH.

Whence you jump to the conclusion that whatever is, is right?

HAROLD.

Whatever is, must be considered in relation to particular facts, and with the precise conditions of its existence; not in relation to general ideas that only represent the rashest conclusions of the smallest experience. Morality is an assumption of complete knowledge according to whose immutable canon we arrogate to ourselves the right of condemning. There is no such knowledge, and the pretence to it is impious. For this is true piety: that we should forget ourselves, and our own paltry preferences, in the feeling that all around us is alive and divine. How much of it have we learned to revere? That is the measure of our merit. No other question will be put to us in the great examination. And

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read carefully, it runs thus: How many moral teachings and so-called necessary truths have we learned to disbelieve?

RALPH.

You forget that over and above the several commandments, there is a sentiment of duty which we get to love for its own sake. What if sometimes we carry our legalism too far? What if we look more at the guide-book than at the country we are travelling through? It is a pity; but, for all that, we carry with us the feeling of a higher order of things. It is better to err as we do than to live without an ideal.

HAROLD.

I do not see that morality saves us from an idealless life. On the contrary, it often leads there. It so binds up what you term the feeling of a higher order of things with the observance of the law that, to keep that feeling, we take to nursing our conscience, and grow daily more meticulous, more pharisaical, more scrupulously careful of our robe of impeccability. And when experience tears it, we know of nothing better than to try and hide the rent. There is no joyful love of the ideal in this fear of sin.

An ideal is a goodly and godly thing when

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it expresses, in a few essential traits, our main tendency, the resultant of our instincts. Whatever they may be, they are always susceptible of this abstraction or reduction to typical beauty. Skill in our individual life consists in discovering these eternal types under every change of feeling that the growth of new instincts, or the pressure of circumstances, may bring about, so that we may always act as the delegates of a superior cause. This is something very different from the pride we take in clinging to a cause because we once felt it as superior to ourselves. Very different, too, from the idea that if we have not clung to it we are degraded. Is this not the history of thousands? They were taught that such and such feelings and beliefs are the right ones; and during a while, they needed none others. That was the good time. They trod lightly and proudly in those days. They were surrounded and borne up by the cause they served. But sooner or later it seemed to need them no longer; silently they were dismissed, and they felt it, but dared not confess it; perhaps not even to themselves. Then came the empty, joyless days. I look at the listless countenances that I see around me, at the youthless eyes, at faces washed into blank unmeaningness, or settled into a hard mask.

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Are these the faces that, but a few years ago seemed the transparent screens of some eternal truth? There is nothing more behind the screen; the room is empty. The gods of yore have passed on, and the master of the house has not dared to let in others—has not known where to seek them. Our moral principles have kept out the new ideals that would have corresponded to our new instincts; but these instincts have not been repelled; they have forced their way into flesh and blood, and if they have not come with their god at the head of them, they have come without him.

RALPH.

But what if they have been repelled, and repelled precisely with the help of our moral principles—the danger of abiding by which you greatly overrate, I think? You speak of conscience nursing, and of the puristic rigorism which absolutely unalloyed morality leads to. But why consider it in that state, since it never is unalloyed, save in very exceptional cases? Do not look at it in the abstract, consider it such as we meet it. I do not see that an over-tender conscience of sin does so much harm in the world. I would there were none greater. Our own impulsiveness and friction with our fellow-

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creatures keep the ermine spirit within bounds. We start out for fanatism, and do not get further than just a beginning of pedantry. Meanwhile we have avoided far greater dangers. Observe the struggle between our conservative scruples and our love of adventure, the little steps we risk, and our emotion over them. It is the salt of life. I love to watch it all. . . We may smile sometimes at those whose greatest pride is that they are respectable citizens; but they walk straight, and their principles bear them good company. We can trust our interests in their hands. Shall we quarrel with them because they have unorthodox notions on the nature of ideals? They are good people; let them alone. The belief that certain ways, and those ways only, are the right ones, helps them to walk therein. I am sorry for the others you speak of; sorry for those who cannot live according to the duty that has been taught them, nor yet find in themselves "the type," or high design, the consciousness of which would beautify their lives. Not sorry enough, however, to condemn on their account the morality which gives strength to many.

HAROLD.

I cannot assent. It is quite right that I should

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look upon certain ways as better than others, for me. That does not imply that my belief in the excellence of these ways has any influence over my conduct. My principles and my conduct may both be products of my organism without proceeding one from another. But, as soon as I get to look upon my principles as the root, and my conduct as the fruit, I am led into the far graver error of assigning an unvarying, universal value to those principles. After which, my next step will be to condemn those who think not like myself.

The belief in the superiority of my paths over all others is by no means a source of strength; it is a sign of ignorance and prejudice, and, to go to the root, it is a sign of foolish egotism. You say the harm is not great—a little pedantry. It goes much further. The time has been when a man, who did not worship as his neighbour, was burned alive. I almost regret the stake and the pile, which at least made grand the ceremony, if the spirit that suggested them is still to animate us. And how can it be quenched, so long as we admit that there is a truth exclusive of other truths; be it a religious, or a philosophical, or a moral doctrine? This is the barrier between hearts; and those who attack the institutions and customs on which it is buttressed, those whom you

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call the destroyers, what is it that they destroy? The work of the spirit of hatred. It is good that we should take pride in ourselves, but can we not do so without referring our merit to our principles, and making these obligatory? In all the attempts of moralists, I see this fatal error: a belief in the superior worth of some one state of mind in which we are supposed to have a true perception of reality. The aspect thus seized must be abided by, and our thoughts and actions subordinated accordingly. Whatever tends to question it must be thrown aside as frivolity, or stamped down as sin—not in ourselves alone, but also in others. That which at first was pure delight in us, a gift of grace—what have we made of it? A yoke for our own necks, and stocks for other men's feet. This is the misdeed of morality, that it takes the innocent pleasure we may have in our own ways, and replaces it by a duty that must rule when the pleasure which was the sign of life is gone; must rule at home and abroad. After which we look round, and marvel to find the world joyless and egotistical. And we try to warm up in ourselves and in others the first day's enthusiasm; we expatiate on the sanctity of the law, in hopes that its defence in common will draw us nearer one to another. Not so. What we may thus stir up

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is a superficial emotion that creates in our imagination a bond of sympathy between us and our brothers, but leaves us as far apart as ever in our practical impulses. We fall into each others' arms while the sound of the church organ lasts, but as soon as it expires we are ready to condemn each other on appearances, and strictly by the letter of the law. The taint of egotism lies farther back—in our misconception of reality. The day we invested it with a character of permanence, and resolved to abide by it such as it appeared to us then, we were cut off from experience. It matters little that we should all agree in extolling the same ideal. There is no flesh and blood in our agreement.

I will give you an example, one of a thousand, the first that occurs to my mind. If we were asked to name some modern writings in which the teachings of morality are ably set forth, we could probably do no better than to point to an author who has blended them with pictures of life admirable for their vividness and wit. You will recollect that one of George Eliot's novels is the story of a pretty village girl who loves a man above her in rank, forgets her principles, bears a child, and then, overcome with shame, terrified at her impending disgrace, kills or abandons the child, is convicted, and condemned to death.

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What are the moral reflections it suggests to the writer? That such are the awful consequences of sin; that we should beware of bringing such misery on a fellow-creature, and that we must all live as duty bids, for the end of lust is shame.

Now, I have no doubt that after closing the book some young girl may shudder, and take into more serious consideration than before the fact that life is not solely made up of ribbons and kisses. She may feel that there is something terribly serious in it, and attend church the next Sunday with more gravity; she may feel more in communion with those who kneel there around her. Better still, she may form some good resolution, and set to her household work with more spirit; be more cheerful and obliging.

Possibly, too, some young man may resolve, on closing the volume, never to be the first to tempt a girl from the right way; and he may like himself and, indirectly, his neighbours also, all the better for his good intentions.

I see in both cases that the imagination has been stirred, the wish aroused to live up to a decorous standard, and a certain sympathy renewed for the commonly accepted ideal of the community.

But what working power is there in these

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good resolutions? How long will they last? We know that hell is paved with them. It is a mere sentimental play that we believe in till we are caught in one of the streams that roll men as drops of water in their statistical tides. There doubtless may be in the community a certain number of persons whose instincts and destinies find in the accepted ideal a proper flower of expression. And if they looked upon it thus, no harm would come from it. But they see in it the root of their virtues; and by education, by predication, by law, they seek to enfore it upon all. The factitious ideal thus imposed upon minds that do not naturally produce it, can no more rule than a theatre king can put down a revolution in the country. The passions and moods that govern us stretch very far back; to change them we should have to change half the order of the universe, beginning by the habits of our ancestors for generations past; we should have to know the secrets of innumerable crucibles at work for thousands of years on atoms that have filtered from as far as the world extends. Are the inexorable facts and the outbursts of force thus generated, to be conjured away by a gesture of the paper-crowned majesty who struts before the footlights of our imagination? He has no power for this; all he can do is to persuade us

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that if we do not obey him, we ought to do so, and that if our neighbours do not obey him, we must chastise them. He blinds us to the recognition of any other ideal but that of which he is a counterfeit, and induces us to commit real crimes in order to punish imaginary offences. It does not occur to our author that the guilty ones of the story are neither the father of the child nor the poor mother, driven mad by fright, but those whose pitiless reproval she feared; and more properly still, the teachers who instilled into their minds the notions of morality.

RALPH.

Perhaps the author thinks that if they had no such notion, their life would be one of those idealless ones you disapproved of a few minutes ago.

HAROLD.

And there is precisely the mistake. My ideal, whatever it may be, has no business to interfere with my neighbour's. Nor is the spiritual life of the community to be sought in the conformity of all to the same type; it must be sought in mutual intelligence. Goodness in our relations with others consists in discovering with them, and, if need be, for them, the purity of the design

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hidden or gradually fashioning itself in them. True sympathy is not reciprocal congratulation on a common ideal, together with the goodwill of like loves like; true sympathy is fine perception. Stand up, Hetty: we understand that you find yourself in circumstances that will demand from you new qualities of character and efforts of intelligence to which you have not been trained. We fear the task may prove a hard one, but as far as our assistance can help you, you have it. Pass the baby round; it shall dance upon our knees.

This is no fancy picture of an impossible community. There are many peaceful villages and alpine hamlets where you will find that though no one makes the above speech, all act up to it. The inhabitants have fully as much sense of the ideal as English villagers, and their homes and their songs show it. You will see there unmarried mothers whom no one, friend, relation, or stranger, thinks of despising. They are judged by their courage and their kindness, by the sweetness of their temper, their will to work, and their gift of affection. They are judged by the rule of Is, and not by the rule of Ought. "We thought that good girls met with no such accident, but it appears they do; therefore, we were wrong. That is all there is of it. If any

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one tries to teach us to the contrary, we shall know that he is more satisfied with his own ideas than desirous of looking round him to improve them."

Now where is the infanticide and the shame and the sin? They were all the work of the moralist. Let him be responsible for them.

RALPH.

"Pass the baby round" may be all very well in your mountains, but we are not living in the Andes or the Caucasus, whichever it was you alluded to.

If we choose to consider all men and all times, it is easy enough to make out that almost any action can be judged in the most contrary manner. After which we argue that there are no permanent rules, that all cases are individual, and that we must judge persons, not actions; sympathetic offenders shall be acquitted; in fact, since they are sympathetic, they are not offenders.

But the fact is that we are none of us living anywhere in time and space; we are living somewhere in particular, and though in exceptional cases peculiar conditions may be worthy of consideration, yet the pressure of our surroundings is strong and constant in one direction;

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it represents the resultant of so many forces to which we have necessarily been subject, that in a general manner the character of any action may be said to be determinable *a priori;* it falls into a given category and meets with a categorical judgment by which we can safely abide. Just as there may be in some legal offences extenuating circumstances, we may sometimes temper the severity of our judgment on moral misdemeanours, but any attempt to subordinate the general character of the action to its accidental character, only opens the door to endless and undignified casuistry which the rough, good sense of the nation at large will not tolerate long. The Jesuits are clever men, and outside of their order we have many ingenious and highly cultured thinkers who have examined right and wrong so minutely that they assure us it is impossible to distinguish between the two, except by the most delicate measurings, and that then it generally turns out the contrary of what we expected.

But all their ingenious work is sooner or later swept away at one breath of popular feeling, and right remains right, and wrong remains wrong; very properly too. There is no question here of metaphysics; it matters little what the abstract nature of Right is, or if it has any at all. The

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plain fact is that the social conditions in which we live are forces that can be reduced to certain general lines. These lines represent the accumulated experience of centuries and indicate to us the directions in which we may profitably work, and those in which we cannot push without entangling ourselves and others in difficulties. A man who recognizes these lines is a man who understands the game; a man who does not recognize them is one whose senses are blunted to certain realities, whether by passion or by an analytical fastidiousness which is simply a lack of breath of perception. He must expect to be turned out of the game; we do not want bunglers.

And how comes it that you esteem so highly certain qualities, such as courage and the gift of affection, while other qualities—chastity, for instance—weigh so little in your esteem? It always comes back to this: what is right, and what is wrong? You must have some criterion, since you blame and praise. Whatever that criterion may be, it is your notion of morality. What I contend is that the correct criterion must be sought in the interests of the community, and that these interests are expressed in general rules before which the individual must bow down.

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WILFRID.

All this is very true; and as soon as you speak in the name of practical sense, we can but follow you. But this practical sense is far closer akin to wisdom than to morality; and although, as you observed, we are not bound to discuss pure and unalloyed morality, since it always is alloyed, yet it is hardly fair to give it credit for the qualities of the other metal. The man you speak of as understanding the game, and whom you oppose to the dull criminal or to the over-subtle casuist, is one whose conduct is governed by distinct and ever-fresh perceptions; he follows the general lines you allude to, because he sees them, and because, such being the case, it will no more occur to him to swerve from them than it occurs to him to walk about blindfolded in the town. The enjoyment he finds in the exercise of the senses he is endowed with traces his course to him. His guide is wisdom, not morality.

RALPH.

It becomes morality as soon as he is subjected to temptations that momentarily hide from him those general lines. He finds no pleasure then in keeping to them; yet he does so because he

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trusts his previous judgment, and places the general truths it revealed to him above the accidental aspect passion gives to things. It is not true that our good resolutions have never any working power; they may be powerless against tendencies accumulated throughout generations, powerless against those currents of necessity that seem to originate far away behind the region of conscience, in the world of Statistics. But we are not always struggling against tendencies and necessities of such an order. Our field of action does not all lie in the cyclone belt. Our conscience is also a region in which accumulated feelings and thoughts condense themselves into streams of action; and there is a world which has very little to do with Statistics. The respect of the general laws of that world in preference to personal interests can very materially influence our ways; it liberates us from subjection to individual impulses; and we say of a man who feels such obligation that he has the sense of duty.

I believe this is morality. And though I think highly of wisdom, it seems to me that we must recognize here something which it cannot give: the feeling of obligation.

Just as we distinguished the wise man who sees the general lines from the dull or perplexed

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one who cannot recognize them, so too must we distinguish the moral man, who conforms his conduct to what he holds to be the direction of these lines, even when he does not see them, from the wise man who is dependent on his eyesight. Nor will it be enough to say that the moral man has merely a better memory than the wise man, and can with its aid steer more safely; for a wise man too may rely sometimes on his memory, knowing that deceitful forms abound just where he is. A healthy, well-developed being this, who finds his joy in the full exercise of his faculties, and will act in view of that joy, even though it be not immediate. The other one acts with obligation. He has vested once for all with a sacred character certain prescriptions, and he has resolved to observe them because he believes them to be in themselves of superior right, as speaking in behalf of interests more general, more permanent, than others. The superiority of these interests is quite distinct in his mind from the profit it may be to him to stake his venture with them, or from the pleasure there may be in discerning their permanent character; these are personal and small aspects of the question to his mind. Their superiority consists in that they are general, whether he enjoy perceiving it or not, whether or not he prosper by serving

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them. The power, the virtue, of the case has gone out of him, and resides in them.

Whereas the man we term wise suggests to us the idea of a fine development, we here strike on quite a new theme—that of voluntary submission; independently of the benefit that may accrue therefrom to him who submits himself.

He does not even need to believe in a future life, where his sacrifice will be made good to him; it bears with it its own recompense, for it delivers from self. You will find many people, if you look round you, who owe to this feeling a quietness and a dignity that forces us to respect them, though their intelligence is far from remarkable, and they lay no claim to the wisdom of sages. They have only one support; but it is the safeguard of the family and the backbone of the nation: morality. Would you take this from them for the sake of I know not what mystical desinvoltura that shall teach them to walk hand in glove with the angels and call the devil "mon cher"? They would loose in the barter.

HAROLD.

I think your argument rests on a confusion. I grant that the interests of the community in which

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we live can be represented by certain general lines, and that our conduct may be influenced by the perception of these lines. We may also, as it were, detach them from ourselves, look upon them as independent of, and superior to, us.

But I deny that this should make their observance obligatory, and that we pass thus from the sway of wisdom to that of Duty.

Not only the interests of the community in which we live, but our own individual tendencies are susceptible of reduction to their essential traits. These essential traits, either of the individual or of the community, can be conceived by the individual as superior to himself, and as having a value independent of any advantage that his perception of them will assure him. He endows them with an external reality.

This is the myth-making work; the gift of the perception of ideals. It reveals to us beauty in others, in ourselves, and in the social body.

But nothing, unless it be wisdom as before, binds us to observe these general lines. The act by which we have exteriorized their value lays us under no new bond towards them, brings no obligation. We are not held to obedience, nor has any order been given us; we have simply acquired the right of worship. Worship entails no obligations. I may worship the moon and

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the stars, without contracting duties towards them.

I account thus for the notion of obligation. We feel that the act by which we have detached from ourselves and exteriorized the value of these general lines or essential traits has added depth to our horizon; that it comes, as it were, from afar. This is a feeling of a new order. The hour which brings it to us resembles neither the hour in which we perceived the general lines, nor the hour in which we bowed down to them. It is a reflex feeling of formal nature, that concerns the subject and has no material contents; we are vaguely conscious of a degree of structural complexity in ourselves.

When we mistake the nature of this feeling, and attribute it to qualities of our ideals, these ideals appear to us obligatory.

RALPH.

And what happens when we do not mistake it?

HAROLD.

Our ideals remain ideals, and do not interfere with other people's; we consider ourselves the richer for having them, but are not tempted to compulsion.

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A feeling of formal origin can have no positive expression; it is by nature an antithesis to our perceptions, whether of individual facts or of general lines; an antithesis likewise to the ideals into which we transform the latter; it is a perpetual reminder that whatever may form the object of our attention and the contents of our consciousness, is only half the game; it is always on the side of the grasper, and can never be grasped nor turned into a peculiar quality of that which is grasped. It is a perpetual denial of the definitive and absolute.

How can you invoke a feeling of this nature in favour of the interests of the community? You say they are more general than those of the individual. So they are in some respects and in some cases. But you forget that men group themselves in communities not in virtue only of what they have in common, but also of that in which they differ from outsiders. These differences, relatively to the essential characters of the species, are accidental. They may be deep rooted, as, for instance, physical differences, differences of build and colour; even then, men thus distinguished have to recognize each other as men; the distinction is more superficial than the sameness of those it divides. And our real communities exist, as distinct one from another,

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by characters far less radical than these, differences due to education and custom, traditions and fancies that we do not inherit with the tissues of our structure. These distinctive traits it is that form in each of our societies the commonwealth and moral unity; and, in a great measure, they constitute the interests of society against more general ones that may be, and often are, represented by the individual. Between the individual and society there may be quarrels, such that on one side there are merely selfish and simple, on the other, complex interests; but there may also be quarrels such that society upholds local traditions against the cause of all men.

The quarrel would not be a long or a bitter one in such cases, were it not that the idea of duty intervenes to make these local traditions appear sacred. No distortion more grievous was ever made of a truth into a falsehood. . . You and I have not the same standard of right and wrong. You look at countries and citizens; I look at the world and at men. I know neither Jew nor Gentile; that which they have in common is alone durable. If you want the feeling of obligation, attach it to the commandment that we should love one another as ourselves, because in that commandment all the

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minor prescriptions of our various laws disappear, together with the limits that divide the communities for which they were made; it is no synthesis of all other laws, it goes directly against them.

You speak of the safeguard of the family and backbone of the nation. I see no reason why we should safeguard the family and prop up the nation, if the domestic and national ideal does not meet our wants. I should first have to be convinced that it represents interests more general than those to which it may be opposed, and purer of fanciful conventions.

Probably you think that these are the idle speculations of volunteer reformers whose opinion nobody cares for. Do not overlook the fact that our entire education is, directly or indirectly, the work of bookmen; we have been subjected to a hieratic training and see with eyes like those of the Byzantine painters. Sooner or later the unartificial will prevail. Perhaps the first thing you will hear from them—you may hear it already if you listen—will be that they take no interest in patriotism; they claim to form an international party and are weary of frontiers.

You may also hear that their ideas of matrimony and family ties are far from orthodox.

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The refuse, you say, the dregs of society. But these same ideas, in a more or less simple garb, are passing round privately and being discussed by men and women who are thoroughly schooled in civilization.

This is no question of jauntiness or desinvoltura, as you call it; no coquetting with evil. It is the bitter earnest of grief and work; it is the travail of a new world. Chief of all the problems that it forces us to discuss, most radical and highest reaching is that of morality. We must look it in the face, and, unless we accept revealed doctrines, we must, I believe, declare ourselves against it. I for one am ready to do so. You have said nothing that can alter my opinion in the main.

LOTHAIRE.

Of all Ralph's remarks the one I liked best was that about certain persons who are not notable for their intelligence, and whom we would not think of calling sages, but yet who command our respect by their self possession and quiet firmness. How comes it that these same persons happen always to be staunch believers in the obligatory character of their principles? You have said nothing of them.

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HAROLD.

Frankly, they embarrass me. I do not know what to say of them. Perhaps they see one aspect of reality and I another. Theoretically they are wrong; and practically they are wrong too sometimes; narrow minded, fanatical, unjust. At other moments they seem to have the best of it. I can but cling to what I see and feel distinctly. I see distinctly what it is whereby a wise man is governed; I can also sympathize with the old polytheistic world, and am ready to sacrifice at many altars, ready to look on a man who has no gods as a poor man. But this monistic feeling of duty (we talk of duties, but the obligation is one) I cannot accept; I do not understand it. I have quarrelled with my consciousness in this sense, that I do not believe it can contain anything but what is incomplete. Whatever feelings or ideas it may furnish me I will accept willingly as fragments, component parts of an ever-absent total. None of these can claim that self-sufficient and ultimate value that we attribute to obligation. Any idea claiming this dogmatic character and assuming to be beyond question, be it the idea of an unique God or that of duty, or whatever else you please, I will struggle against with the feeling that

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I am struggling against idolatry. Why do you try to get into your conscience more than it can hold? Why do you try to think the unthinkab'e and name the unnameable? The best commandment that has ever been given was not understood by him who conveyed it: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. We do nothing else when we say—wherever we may point—"Behold! here is the supreme." Idols, mere idols! And the nearest approach we can make to that for which they stand, is an incessant protestation against them. Yes, I know, they all seem good and fair at other hours; and perhaps they are good and fair as far as they go. But they do not go very far. Nothing goes very far except the eternal flowing of forms that melt and pass. Down with this one, then, and next another; we are above all iconoclasts. For this cause I live, and death can only crown my life; my own personality is an idol.

LOTHAIRE.

Please do not strike that chord again. We are agreed that its peculiar sound is the last and most abstract answer of a certain race of men to ultimate questions. What we want to find out is how these men, your clients, answer every-day questions. We want to see the politics of

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those whose philosophical device is: "All things flow."

RALPH.

Their politics can be expressed very simply as the doctrine of revolutions. They are anarchists.

LOTHAIRE.

Yes; but what is Anarchism? Of course we are not speaking of its coarser manifestations, but of the spirit of protestation that we notice in some of the least blood-thirsty of men, some of the most gifted too and the most religious, who tell us that our life, such as the actual social adjustments make it, is a lie. This is more than a question of material reforms. We cannot help noticing how many human beings live truly in solitude, even of those who seem busiest in the busy crowd; how superficial and unreal our contact is with our fellow-creatures as social factors. Harold is right in comparing our sympathy as members of the same commonwealth to the shallow emotions that die away with the sound of the church organ.

RALPH.

I don't think we can expect to introduce sentiment into our economical or practical con-

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nections. Sentiment has its own range in what we term private life.

LOTHAIRE.

And it behoves us to consider if this restriction of the sphere of affection to private life does not vitiate the problems that we keep distinct therefrom; if it does not make our social connections—I mean those which have an economical or a political bearing—factitious, and indeed to many men unbearable.

You may say that anarchy would be a poor remedy. True enough as long as we see nothing, or nothing is shown to us, in anarchism save the wish to destroy. But, once for all, let us set that form of it aside as not pertaining to the same level as the interests we are discussing. To use again Harold's phrase: Let us not answer every-day questions with the trump of the Last Judgment, though it may be a satisfaction to know that we can blow it, or that there are persons who can blow it for us, when needful. Such, I suppose, are the great priests of Nihilism. Both our own thoughts and the course of history throw us face to face with situations which refuse to be brought under any plan of expediency, can receive no rational response. The Christian bows his head and says: "The will of God."

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If others exclaim: "Let us worship Sheeva," I take it that this cry does not exhaust their religion, and that they will be no more inconsequent in speaking otherwise at other hours than the Christian in worshipping as father of goodness a God who, as almighty, is also the creator of Evil.

I say let us set aside the purely destructive aspect of Anarchism and hold that it attempts to meet the demand expressed in this phrase of Emerson: "The philosophy we want is one of mobility and fluxions."

HAROLD.

Don't quote.

LOTHAIRE.

Just consider the tendencies, more or less general, but certainly worth taking into account, that our last and this evening's conversation reveal. On the one hand, a revolt against any philosophical system of unity; which many would call a revolt against all philosophy, genuine scepticism. Then the denial that the feeling of obligation can be brought to bear on any fixed point.

Intellectually, we remain in presence of separate

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and irreductable truths; the great synthesis is denied, and with it monotheism.

Morally we must content ourselves with the various injunctions of wisdom, and with distinct, independent ideals. Something beyond them is indeed recognized, but whereas we were accustomed to place it in the obligatory character of certain prescriptions, we are now told to understand it as a perpetual warning against all dogmatism.

Men who can feel thus, will naturally be out of harmony with the main principle of our governments, which all of them suppose one supreme power, be it the will of the sovereign or that of the majority. And what is more, the very way in which, so to speak, the bricks are laid together from one end to the other of the social fabric, will offend their sense of combination.

They are not exclusive and partial enough in their ideas, to accept the creed of any political party. The same immaterialism, the same sense of the great value of the silent interval, that prevents them from summing up divers truths into one supreme one, runs all through their temperament and debars them from that feeling of complete reality inseparable from one path, which is the craftsman's strength. Their nature is repugnant to classes as it is to dogmas.

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Now, our whole economical and political edifice rests on this distribution of men by parties, classes, and crafts. We muster by species and we prosper by the acceptance of specific characters as absolute. Labour being divided, all such as are concerned with it meet and deal together in a specific character. The first principle of active life is not to consider persons, but functions—not to mix up sentiment and business. In a like manner, the principle of political association is a common platform, regardless of those who gather round it; the principle of religious association, a common creed. It is only as we move towards private life and individual sympathies that the principle of association becomes less and less material, and gets to consist more in a proportion or relation between parts than in any one given trait. Who was it who interrupted her lover as he was about to explain his attachment: "If you know why, I am lost." She spoke well. We do not and must not know the wherefore. No reason can be given, no one quality pointed out which accounts for the delight we take in our friends. It is them, the entire and peculiar confederacy of their parts, not this or that one, that we love. Love has no basis, no fulcrum, cannot be bound to things named; its cause is

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always between them, in the silent framework. To judge of its true nature we must watch it in those over whom it obtains an irresistible control. Consider a mother's affection; whatever her child may be, comely or plain, gentle or vicious, bright or dull, she will love it. Her affection penetrates beneath the surface of qualities; it seems to reach the skeleton.

So too does passion. There is a sad and beautiful old story in which a lady destroys her own beauty to escape from the pursuit of a lover to whom she may not listen. And as he still persists, she asks him when his persecution will cease. "Never," he replies, "till my bones clasp yours in the grave." Nor is this terrible form of love the only one in which we may see the contempt of qualities; more spiritual, it will refuse to be daunted by death or by the change of years; it essence is eternity.

RALPH.

You are picturing extreme cases.

LOTHAIRE.

Undoubtedly. All this is tempered generally by the various requirements of life. Indeed, from the social point of view, the blind affection of a mother is morbid. So too would

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be a passion that refused to be altered by changes. Affection will fashion itself more or less in conformity with the general tendencies of the temperament in which it grows; and in persons of strong social virtue—I mean in natures well adapted to the actual social forms—it will in a certain measure be dependent on positive qualities. Compared, however, with the specific connections of social life into which these persons enter, it retains a marked character of immateriality; sufficiently so for them to answer, if asked what it is they love in such a one: neither this nor that, but him or her, a general impression different from any separate nameable one and underlying them all. For love carries us nearer to the substance or formal type of things than judgment; as far as it extends it lifts the veil of qualities, and as long as it lasts the world it opens to our view is one where rust cannot consume, nor thief break in and steal.

RALPH.

Granting all this, what does your argument tend to establish?

LOTHAIRE.

That the instinct of love plays a great part in

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the rebellion we see growing around us against the law in all its forms.

I can understand that natures in which this instinct is predominant should be incapable of accepting our system of thought; it is too analytical and too materialistic for them; our cut-and-dried social adjustments must seem to them inexplicable. I do not think they can have the same feeling of personality as men who have the virtues and faults of dogmatic characters. If they are so made that whatever holds in one field of mental vision, whatever can be grasped in one thought, appears to them as a fragment of a reality that cannot be contained in any of its parts, it is that to them all perceptions wane into insignificance by the side of the fuller contact love gives them with reality. They say, with the Persian poet, "Listen to the flute lamenting itself in the stillness of the night: it wails because it is cut off from its bed of reeds."

RALPH.

I like that.

LOTHAIRE.

Of course. So do I. So do we all. We all have moods of this depth. But with some they are passing gusts, as when some popular

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enthusiasm or patriotic pride make hearts that will be estranged to-morrow beat to a common pulse.

In others they penetrate to the core, and will fashion the whole temperament. These are the lovers of eternity, in whose eyes our first and greatest error is the belief in a distinct personality, the notion and feeling of a primary self.

RALPH.

What do you mean by a primary self?

LOTHAIRE.

The independence of the parties concerned in a contract, so that each is organized more or less perfectly but at least sufficiently to exist in working order, without the other, and before the partnership. First the several contracting parties; then the body they form together by agreement, each party retaining his distinct individuality and being all the more likely to prove a reliable contractant in proportion as that individuality is more firmly marked. "First be master of thyself." This is our great commandment. It is a translation into practical terms of the general formula of our entire architecture, mental and social. And it supposes a dogmatic genius in those to whom it is addressed. If you can

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accept the contents of any one state of consciousness as a complete, or the most complete attainable, perception of reality, and say, "here will I abide," you have a right to an individuality of your own; it is one of the features of a vast system of organization; you are fitted for association by class characters, for the division of labour, for rank and caste; for the separate ownership of property, for the separate ownership of persons; you have the separate ownership of yourself. To all of which I have only two things to say: First, that though this system is not one of love, but of division, it must meet seme very deep want of our nature, or it would not have prevailed for some thousands of years; and second, that it seems to me to be thoroughly understood only by such as accept a revealed religion and believe in a future life. The problem as it is placed when we admit separate human consciences, and all that this admission entails, cannot be worked out in one world. I hold that our present modes of thought, feeling, association, are all of them different features of one same system of combination; a system of which religious dogmatism is a necessary part. I am aware that this opinion does not at first sight seem corroborated by facts, inasmuch as we see that many people reject the religious part

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of the system, and claim to be staunch adherents of the rest.

But we also see that slowly but surely the remaining positions come to be questioned. Few people are thoroughgoing in their ideas, and the force of tradition and example is so strong that they will continue for a long time to feel secure on grounds that are undermined. It is, however, but a question of time. Change one factor, change them all.

RALPH.

Easier to say than to do.

LOTHAIRE.

Of course; and until the new design is sufficiently clear to be seized as a whole, the theories and schemes which represent certain parts of it will not be properly judged. They will be judged in reference to the previous design with which they will prove in the long run incompatible; or they will fare worse, and at once appear monstrous.

We must recollect that the system under which we are living bears upon all of us, and from all sides, with a terrible weight, possibly forcing into moulds that do not suit them men to whom it does not even occur that there might

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be different ones, or who, seeing them, are bound by their education, twisted into an artificial form for their lifetime. The consequence is that they mistrust their own doubts and strive to feel as others do, wondering sometimes in silence how it comes that they seem to themselves unreal. Only at some one point or other are their doubts strong enough to prevail; they will adopt on some one subject an opinion which, given the company of orthodox opinions it is received into, must bear the character of a heresy. So that we who look on and judge all these symptoms of revolt separately as they are presented to us, watch them with more or less interest, but finish by turning away with a sense of the vanity of schisms. To appreciate them correctly we should have to understand their position and meaning in a system so different from our own that many of our virtues, transferred into it, might be vices, and some of our vices, virtues.

I am trying to speak, mark you, for those who claim that not in heaven, but on earth, are to be fulfilled the ineffaceable words: the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

HAROLD.

Speak on. These it is towards whom my thoughts turned the other evening; the millions

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of men and women who are morally dying of hunger.

RALPH.

But what is the peculiar notion of personality which you tell us is to be expected from them?

I can see that you have caught up, twisted together and spun out a good way Wilfrid's and Harold's thread of ideas; you connect as parts of the same development a particular conception of certitude and a particular view of morality; both seem to you expressions of an immaterialistic bent of mind, unwilling to accept as sovereign any thought singled out and arrested in a fixed shape by the analysis of conscience. I see also that our principle of association, wherever affection does not intervene, is the acceptance of some specific, and therefore dominant, character; so I can follow your argument when you point to the division of society into classes, parties, and crafts, as being, for the same reasons as dogmatic thought, odious to certain minds. For they seem to crave always for the entire and to conceive it as a formal framework which the drapery of qualities will only reveal on condition that we do not attach our preference to any one of them. And when you trace all this tendency to an overpowerful instinct of love, you

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are possibly right. But what were you saying about individuality and the ownership of one's self, and the ownership of persons?

LOTHAIRE.

I think that the exclusive form love takes between lovers, the limitation of it to two partners, which is supposed to be its very essence, is simply one of the features of the scheme suited to dogmatic natures. It is legitimate and beautiful in those who look forward to a future life, because the self-assertion that it presupposes is redeemed in a feeling that makes this entire existence of ours, with our own separate personality and that of our fellow-creatures, nothing more than a provisional and relative reality. The other world is the outlet of a system which, without it, would imprison us in the foreground of consciousness. If that outlet is closed, and we no longer see through it the reversed image of life on the second screen, it is right that the half-reality we still keep in view should not be accepted by us at its face-value, and that each one of the figures into which it is divided should impress us with a sense of illusion and incompleteness. My opinion is that the consequences of such a change are only half worked out; they will be found to reach farther than to our metaphysical and

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ethical and political views, even to the very core of our conscience, to the notion of self and of love. "God made man in his own image," says the written book, and it says well, connecting at once as part of a same chain one God and man *one*.

But the unwritten book says: The gods made groups of men and women in the image of themselves, so that each group was on earth the shadow of a god. Between all such as formed part of the same spiritual body, there was neither malice, nor envy, nor jealousy, nor wilfulness, nor vanity, nor self-assertion of any kind. The love that united them was not like that which we now call love; it was the certitude that one by another they moved in eternity, and that without each other they would be as grains of dust. They thought not as we do of life and of death, for all the various phases of life and its now bitter end were to them as the rites of a sacred service all equally desired. The sorrow of one was not his sorrow, but a celebration of sorrow by him for all, in order that the ceremony be perfect. So too with his joy; only his turn to lead the choir. There was no shame between them, and none claimed another as his own and his alone, save when the two knew by their increased love for others that their separate delight

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was for a time being a task assigned to them by their companions. Nor had they any wish to prolong it; there was no parting between them, no independent souls to part; they were one in their god.

WILFRID.

Finish the story, since you have begun it.

LOTHAIRE.

Those were the days of the Elohim, who were equal gods. But when Jehovah the invader had conquered heaven and driven the Elohim into exile, he established the rule of one law, and promised unto all who would observe it eternal life with him. Then the bond between men was broken; each one believed in himself as in a distinct being. And they were ashamed. "Surely," they said, "we have been dreaming." For all was changed. Whereas they had previously attached to all the events of their life a ritual and impersonal meaning, they now accepted the promise of another world as a substitute for this work of spiritual insight. Feelings and thoughts acquired an intrinsic value; the work of classification and the rule of the persistence in one line began. It is lasting still. But its justification ceases the moment the faith on which it rests is

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lost. Whence the weariness and the unrest of so many. Let them return to God. Or if they cannot, let them see where they are going. Let them understand that the doubt which begins on religion will not rest till it reaches the substance of ourselves, and that it undertakes to refashion everything, from our philosophical views to our sexual relations. For the spirit of doubt, carried far enough, becomes a great affirmer. I marvel sometimes at the unconscious faith of those who deny. What are they, our madcap anarchists? Toilers for a cause they wit not of; a van-guard to the army of the exiled gods.

HAROLD.

I am of those who cannot join pillaging bands, but you will find me on the muster-roll of the regular army.

LOTHAIRE.

My conclusion is: either doubt not at all or do it thoroughly. We must either admit another world where the imperfect reality of this one, such as it appears on the foreground of our conscience, will be perfected—in which case we can with impunity accept the law and abide in one path; or we must learn to be seers—men in whose eyes no thoughts, feelings, or events, are taken at

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their face-value, nor esteemed otherwise than as symptoms of a reality that lies between them; so that the individual himself, with his separate destiny, is to them an illusion, and that the unit, the one, must be sought in the assembly of those persons who by love for one another can dispel that illusion. In such an assembly or group no one would seek to detain as his own any particular condition of inward or outward existence; he would not fear to accept his turn whatever it might bring; he is as a willing actor in his company, and he feels the truth of his life not abiding in one character, but in passing from one to another. In one thing only he abides, for it is to him the condition of change—the love of his companions and the feeling of their and his joint eternity.

RALPH.

I see the alternative you present, but which side do you favour?

LOTHAIRE.

Why not the better tested of the two? Yet both, provided the partisans are sincere. Let him who has the gift of belief believe in the earth and in heaven; let him who has the gift

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of "through sight" follow doubt till it ends in love and rids him of himself.

HAROLD.

O Lothaire! don't be so impartial; the moderate achieve nothing. We cannot go back towards the past; we cannot check the onward course of doubt, nor bid men believe without enquiry, and dispense with proof as they used to, for fear of strange discoveries. We must push on. What does it matter that we have to mark our road with ruins and that the end be far? Our civilization must pass as others have passed; our history will be to-morrow but a speck in the distance, our culture nothing but a curious form of barbarity; children will talk of the 19th Century as we talk of the Age of Stone, and after that we shall be forgotten. Why, then, should we cling to our beliefs and tremble for our homes? Suppose they should crumble about our ears—what of that? We have received the tidings of a new world, and this is our great joy: to know that our misgivings, our weariness, our longings that seem never to be fulfilled, are but the shadow it casts before it, and that it comes to us borne upon the yearnings of those who have been reproved.

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RALPH.

I am willing to make some profit out of what has been said, though in neither of the ways proposed to me. Probably I am not of pure breed. On the one hand, I cannot profess to believe when I merely understand the beauty of faith; on the other hand, I am not inclined to push my ideas to their extreme consequences, as you, Harold, are ready to. We sing a good deal too high in the solitude of logic, and our thoughts generally need tuning down.

However close a chain of arguments may seem I should always be afraid of trusting myself very far to it in such delicate matters. I know what you want to say: that it is not merely a chain of reasoning, and that your philosophy is but a garment thrown over facts such as the wants and tendencies of given temperaments. So it may be, but the misfortune is that these garments, as you yourself have urged against me, swell out so that they cover more than was intended and fill the horizon. Our dialectical robes would need the two Açvins for pages. Why do you always talk of sorrow? It is not fair. Have you never known what it is to feel happy? There is good philosophy in a little happiness. Of course I don't deny that individualism and

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selfishness work much harm in the world. And yet the world is fair and there is something bright in Will! And it is good to love, not in your impersonal, visionary manner, but as humble mortals, here on the hard, frosty earth, under the sparkling sky. Are you sure that to get rid of selfishness we must get rid of self? He is such an old friend, that I am afraid he comes to us with our blood and will pass on with it. Look at our children; as the old ones sang so do the young ones chirp. They think a great deal of their little selves, and it is true that they are often selfish; but they love one another all the same, and after they have quarrelled they kiss and make friends because life is strong in them and each hour opens new fields to their sight. Their wits emancipate them. Here you have just what you desire, what your whole argument makes for: the gift of affection and of self-forgetfulness due to something that saves us from tarrying in one mood. And you seek for that something in the negation of dogmatism and of individuality. But I see it in freshness of mind; we shake self off, not when we deny him, but when we forget him. He comes back again, and we turn away from him again. We are neither living by rule nor by love, neither on the foreground of conscience nor in the background, we are moving to

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and fro, from the one to the other. There is mobility and fluxion for you. Do not let us invent anything; it is all there if we only know how to look for it.

You work out systematically a certain number of ideas and tell me that only two schemes are good for anything, that of the past, with its half-forgotten creeds, and that of a future, of which all we can discern are dim, fantastic forms that might look very different when we got nearer to them. Whatever lies between these two lands, our actual habit of thought and intercourse, you declare inconsequent and unsatisfactory. So it may be to those who examine it so closely; but the question may be raised if it is not you who are mistaken in examining opinions on their own merits, forgetful of the practical value there is in the simple profession of those opinions. The same with our institutions, and indeed with the feelings that are woven into them: you judge them all by their shadow on the screen, as images, and not as performances; you forget in all your calculations the dense atmosphere of action. What is it you are both fighting against? The coarse, dull illusion that makes men think: "Here is the point where we grasp reality;" and one of you says: Let the illusion persist, and correct it by the admission that this world is but

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an antechamber; whilst the other sees no escape but in perpetual mobility, and forbids us to stop anywhere lest we should make unto ourselves idols. All this may be true of men who attach an exaggerated importance to their ideas or feelings—live in them, and feed on them—true of a race of fanatics or ideologists. But a keen sense of what is going on around them extenuates in other men's minds the importance of their own beliefs; they can afford to abide by them because the complexity of their occupations and interests stands in lieu of the mobility you seek for in pure thought. Their hours of dogmatism do but join in as one of the figures of a dance. Nor does it so much matter what their belief is; let them take the one that is suited to their times; its merit lies in that they perform it. Suppose you can show them that their philosophy, which claims to account for everything, cannot keep its promise, and that it breaks down before certain problems—what of that? Their doctrine lays a false pretence to universality, but its assertion is a modest factor in their lives; and by ignoring the active virtue it has as one among many factors, by shutting yourselves up in it and disproving it from within, you are guilty of greater intellectual presumption than theirs, even though the result of

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your meditations should be the disenthroning of reason. You are asking of it more than they do. It is a mock humility. If you were not over pensive you would not rebel against reason; nor would you find it necessary to invent a kingdom of love, either in heaven or in the future on earth; the ceaseless longing for the entire that suggests these expedients to you would merely urge you forward with something of the generous confidence of animals, who live more and question less, something of the human sympathy that enables men to take pride in each other's labours, makes them wish to step out of the solitude of their thoughts and join in the work of the age wherein they are born. Part of that work is Legislation, in the higher sense of the word—the determination of a standard and the mapping out of ideal landmarks; it is a creative performance in which all those, and those alone, who are in sympathy with their surroundings participate.

What I am willing to thank you for is that you have reminded me how apt we are to forget that the maintenance of the law is a process of perpetual renewal, and that we must always be gently displacing our landmarks, because the ground slips. The future may prove that the current of thought you have traced, and traced back to deep

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sources, is one that will have to be reckoned with. That is a question that cannot be decided in this musty old inn of ours. But, be that as it may, I refuse to admit that the superiority of ancient beliefs would be any reason to return to them if they are no longer the natural outgrowth of our time; and I refuse to let myself be cheated out of those I have, on the plea that there are questions to which they furnish no answer. I am not sure that those questions are meant to be answered in thought or feeling, and that we do not come nearer to the reply in setting them aside, girdling our loins for the day's battle, and lying down to die without further ado when our race is run. What is your opinion, Wilfrid?

WILFRID.

If I had to take part I might sit here and listen to you the whole night through, and agree all the time with the one who has spoken last. Each one of you is presenting to me opinions in which he has entire confidence because behind them he feels the body of his instincts; whereas I, who look on from without and feel no such body, have the impression of dealing with pure surfaces; and it needs several of them to determine a solid. I need you all. Your opinions complete in you a long series of inward experiences; they are

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terminal, and their value is in what lies behind them. To me these same opinions are initial; I have not lived into them, I have merely understood them; I begin where you stop.

Suppose the following statement to be made: "The king is in his chamber, counting out his money." It may be to some one—say, to the lord treasurer—a matter of the utmost importance whether that statement be true or not; there are countless threads of past history that connect him with the whole scene, and his life may at that moment be in jeopardy. But cut all these threads and leave the statement in its abstract beauty, it becomes a matter of very little importance whether the king is or not occupied in the manner described, or indeed if there be any such person as the king; we should be mad if we discussed it; we grant it all, and want to hear next about the queen and the chambermaid, and their adventures.

You are in the position of the lord treasurer, and I am in the position of the child who is waiting for the blackbird—with one thing to be added lest the comparison mislead. In the lord treasurer's case, the question reads: Is the statement exact or not? which is a matter that depends on evidence given by the senses. In your case the question reads: Is the opinion

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professed by you the proper one for you to profess? is it the right word because it comes at the right place? It is not a question of faithful representation, but of appropriate complements.

Do you recollect that the other evening, when we were discussing what value a theory of life can have, I affirmed that any such theory is a deed of speech that teaches us nothing, but goes towards forming something? So I say now. Your words do not grapple with things susceptible of exact measurement or experimental proof, and consequently they have two very different values. To you they are a matter of belief; to me they are songs, or verses of a song.

LOTHAIRE.

I should think, then, you must approve Ralph's protestation against the over-great importance he says we attribute to our thoughts and feelings. The theory of law through sympathy, and sympathy through activity, ought to suit you.

WILFRID.

Oh yes! doubtless. It partly puts in words what I would put in deeds. Only it is a theory, and as such no better than any other. It might just so happen that the very man who professed it would fail in the practice. Whereas one who

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theoretically denies the law, might at the same time have those very virtues of activity and sympathy by which we try to explain it. Can you tell by the adventures of the puppets who the man is who carries the show on his back? We are all showmen; it is part of our business; and, as far as that part is concerned, we are the unconscious hirelings of the Word who assigns to each of us a phrase and an attitude. Toil as we may for him, our whole task is but begun when his orders have been obeyed.

I will tell you frankly that to my mind there are mathematical questions, chemical questions, physiological questions, and so on; there is no philosophical question, no metaphysical or religious problem. What we mistake for it is a stunted form of the question of life, a merely psychical aspect of the problem how to live. But any intellectual treatment of this question cannot be otherwise than miserably insufficient; it is a question that must be answered with our muscles, our passions, with our joys and sorrows, and our laughter, and with our hands and feet, as much as with our beliefs. I am unable to understand how people can go on discussing as to what we ought to think and feel. There is no one way better than another. If there were such a way it would have been discovered ere

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now, and all men would have entered into it long since. The wise and the strong recognize this fact and turn away from general opinions, or at least look upon those they may profess as a proper flower of imagination given the surrounding soil.

"I am a Buddhist; and I am a man of progress; and I am a Christian; and I am an Epicurean, or a Stoic, or a Subjective idealist."

In what am I the wiser for the information? You may, for all that, be raw, untutored minds, or far-travelled sages. The same words are the words of the wise and of the foolish.

Of course men will go on professing what they hold to be correct philosophical views, and I am willing to grant they each and all of them are proper complements to some real conditions of life. If it were not so they would not continue to blossom as they do in eternal contradiction of each other. But to compare their intrinsic merits is waste of time and vexation of spirit.

Some events of our inner life—thoughts or sentiments—are useful even as a concluding ceremony, a national anthem after a battle; the work is over, but something yet is called for. They are the unsubstantial but necessary accompaniment of reality, like the shadow which we

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can ill-afford to lose, as the German story teaches us. But who needs the shadow of his shadow? And what else can we call the second-day thoughts that fasten on the primary ones when we seek to justify our opinions by their intrinsic qualities—when we discuss them, in short? This it is that I term a misuse of language.

I grant the value your opinions may have for you, because I assume that you have adjusted a certain number of ideas or feelings with the same unconscious skill as is shown in the rest of your organism; your poem is a new proof of the plastic power of your temperament. But I refuse to discuss these opinions. Persons who oppose one doctrine to another and ask themselves which is the better, are going astray. Observe that though they make a good deal of noise in the book-world, they form a very small class. Most men never dream of examining in the same spirit their own beliefs and those of other people. They are simply astonished, or amused, or indignant according to circumstances, that there should be people who do not think as they do. It is as though they were told that it is more comfortable to breathe under the water than in the air. Doubt is unknown to them.

Now, whatever may be the advantages or disadvantages of this state of simplicity, it is the

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only state in which we have the right to profess beliefs or hold general opinions, because then they are primary products, and have, like all the other factors of our organism, an unconscious substratum; they are motived outside of thought and feeling. Believers of this kind do not compare or weigh; they never argue but their own side of the case, and, what is more, their belief is not grounded on the arguments they adduce; it springs from their temperament or grows out of their complex interests; and any intellectual or moral evidence they may invoke merely serves as a weapon to fret their opponents with. What is apt to mislead one here is that wherever truth—or the representation of reality—is concerned, reasons are of the utmost importance, because reasons there stand for outward perceptions, and the more we have of them, the broader the testimony. Not so in the case of doctrines where it is not question of reflecting mirror-wise, but of a new and complementary development of our plastic power. Reasons in this case are harmonies of concepts. They can serve as musical chords, but not as roots. Thoughts that do not grow from the social or animal soil as blindly as plants from the earth, thoughts which in the realm of consciousness are of the second generation, can neither

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reflect any image, as does the statement of an observed fact, nor take the place of primary beliefs. They can serve neither for truth nor for faith, and if we make assertions of them, it should be with the distinct understanding that we are claiming the poet's privilege to its very fullest extent, that the assertions we make are not to be judged by their import, but to be conceived as mere devices whereby we seek to model a form uncontained in any of them.

LOTHAIRE.

But if we are not poets, what are we to do when we have grown out of the phase of unquestioning assent, when the times of deliberation and criticism have come?

WILFRID.

Frankly abjure all opinions that are not for us beyond the range of conceivable contestation. We are incurable myth makers, and however matter of fact we may fancy ourselves, we shall always walk among illusions. But those alone among them help us whose title-deeds we do not think of examining.

No amount of criticism will teach us which of two doctrines to prefer, for the moment criticism begins we are out of the stage at which,

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at least on the subject concerned, any doctrine at all is allowable. We have entered into a new field, where our task is no longer to pronounce in favour of one opinion or another, but to note the conditions of their production. If we were to pronounce, our verdict would merely be a cold-blooded glorification of ourselves very different from the straight heartedness of those who, holding the same opinion, are confident that it is the right one because they have borne it and feel that it is alive.

You have called my attention to two opposed systems which, for brevity's sake, I may designate as the anarchical ideal and the legal ideal. My interest in the debate lies here. One of you condemns all dogmatism and the very idea of the Law, because he says that we cannot isolate one idea from all others and seek in a part the authority which belongs to the whole. He has a keen sense of the interdependency of ideas, and he refuses to accept any single one as sovereign. Now, as Lothaire pointed out, men of this turn of mind are prone to seek on every field the same rapid and ceaseless circulation, the same quick achievement of the entire, which they are accustomed to in the republic of thought. They are roving and lawless. Love alone can bind them, because its desire has a

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taste of totality; it is a return to the pristine unity; it is the ray of light which has passed through no prism, and the eyes that colours only weary turn towards it for rest. These are men who will always look forward to a reign of love and fraternity on earth. Carried to the extreme, their temperament leads them to deny the reality of separate individuals and to claim that our social body will be a lie until its unit is no longer the individual, but groups of persons who renounce their separate personality in favour of the community. And so far is this spirit of self-renouncement carried, that we see them extol death as the supreme effort and crowning moment of their life-long work.

What have we at the beginning? A man who sits down to think alone. And what have we at the end? A man who refuses to say *I*.

You heard the answer. We were told that this is considering the problem in the individual alone, assuming that he stands like a solitary traveller in front of the Sphinx; we were reminded that there is between the members of the social body such as it actually exists, between the citizens of a same country, a bond as natural as that which exists between the various personages of the intellectual drama, so that if it is vain to seek for one thought of higher authority than all

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others, it is vainer still to place the question of law and duty in that intellectual manner. The spirit of legality with the self-respect and self-assertion that it supposes, with its escort of rights and duties, was shown to us as a gift refused to the solitary man, but conceded to him who has a keen sense of the reality of his neighbours.

What have we this time at the beginning? A man who looks around him, and not within. And what have we at the end? A man in whose eyes the proper form of society is one which supposes, and tends to promote, the highest degree of inward organization, the most complex and centralized type of moral individuality. On this field he will seek to realize the unity of a perfect federation, and he rejects, as a dream of Utopia, the hope of bringing human beings into any such cohesion. His first interest turns away from the inward drama, away from the solitary being, towards the fellowship of men; and his last word is that this fellowship is both to be promoted and to be limited by the virtues that make a distinct, well-entrenched individuality.

Now, the story of the growth of these two systems seems to me more important than the systems themselves. I feel that I am in presence of two plans of architecture, or two contrasting

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schemes of anatomy, which I hold to be quite independent of the particular forms in which they are embodied. All the ways of thinking and feeling that have been called to contribution on either side are but the variable matter whereby the design of the structure happens to be manifested. And what I long for is not an appreciation of the different social systems or the different views of morality that we have been asked to consider. What I long for is the diagram we should have before us if the various ideas the two speakers have built their discourses with had been presented to us under the form of signs expressive of nothing save the mode of their succession or coalescence, their degree of composition, and the different planes of abstraction on which they were taken.

I believe that had we such diagrams before us, they would prove to be general designs of which all cases and forms of combination, whether of atoms, numbers, thoughts, or men, are but various expressions. I believe we should hold the superior logic that Leibnitz did not deem inaccessible. But I believe also that we shall never approach it by preferring one thought to another, nor perhaps till we begin to study thoughts through phrases, and phrases as we would exterior phenomena, as masses of sound.

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By attaching our attention to the thoughts expressed, we are merely losing sight of that which made them of value to those who put them forth—their utility as means of carrying out a structural design.

HAROLD.

This seems to me a sort of agnosticism carried beyond its usual limits and applied not only to religious matters, but to moral and social questions, as well as to scientific theories as soon as they assume a general character; in short, to everything that does not fall under sensuous evidence or exact measurement. Those who profess it will find themselves detached from all men, cut off from all human interests, observant, but solitary.

WILFRID.

Not so. You may be so organized that you have a legitimate home-spun faith, and I can only repeat that you are quite right to profess it. Not that it will change or maintain anything, but it is a proper reponse to myriads of facts of a non-psychical order. You are standing on the brow of the hill and blowing the horn while the chase is deep down in the ravine. If I stand a degree further back and do not directly respond as you do, but examine your answers, I am bound to

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consider in them instead of those modes of combination—whether between thoughts or men—that they severally favour, those modes of combination that they are. My "atheorism" merely expresses the conditions proper to thought a degree more abstract than yours; it is a question of distance and focus. This it is that makes me look forward to the revival, under some new form, of the beautiful old pagan world, a world of many gods, where there will be room for you as well as for me.

As for the solitude of the observant, I think our true commerce and our real sympathy with our fellow-creatures have, after all, very little to do with our opinions. Most of the business of the world is done in hours when men are content to deal with perceptions.

A systematic abstention from systems and theories may seem to you a lack of fervour, but to those who have accepted it it is as the contact with bodies after a weary struggle against shadows. They have travelled from theory to theory, and belief to belief, ever critical, ever in search of the new party to which they might belong. They have spent years seeking light within their consciousness, and they might vainly seek for ever, for light always comes from without, as it will come just now to us over yonder

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hills. Nor can it come to these men in the same manner as it may to you, for you think somewhat after the fashion in which the birds sing, whilst they only think upon thoughts; and they first gain footing on some external reality, such as temperament and social pressure may be to you, when all their previous moral or intellectual activity becomes to them as a portion of the outer world in which they have no more share than in the tides or the wind, no share save the observing of it. They re-enter into communion through perception.

A further reason for which I am disinclined to pronounce in favour of either of your schemes is this. I believe, as I told you, that they, as indeed any scheme, might be expressed by partly or wholly different ideas from those selected, so that—be it said by the way—many men to whom the particular forms you have chosen may be meaningless, would under some other form recognize tendencies of their own. And now I add that there is not one of us in whom many such designs do not co-exist, though not all needed at the same moment. We are all of us, in some wise, in some spot, here anarchists, and there partisans of the law, even when the very words are unfamiliar to us. The systems which you defend, and other ones too, will all of them

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be needed and dipped into by us at different moments. We are not hewn of one piece, as we should have to be to adopt one and discard the others. Are you yourselves in reality as consequent to your doctrines as you fancy while advocating them? Do you never trespass on each other's grounds?

You, Ralph! however well adapted to the usual conditions of every-day life your views may be, however well working and practical they must seem to you, and doubtless are, in comparison with Harold's venturesome aspirations—can you deny that there are moments both in the destiny of the individual and that of nations when the wisdom of the wise is rebuked? Unanswerable as it may be, the question will ever and anon arise, in presence of a deathbed, before the unearthed ruins of a forgotten city, or the silence of a frozen planet: "What is the end of our labour?" In those moments, the robust, common sense by which we reproved schemes incompatible with the maintenance of our individual dignity and at war with our civilization, pales in the dawning on us of a neglected, all-effacing mystery. The light is changed, a spell is cast over the scene; the king's crown seems to be of pasteboard, the grave statesmen and the lawgivers look like

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simpering old women, and he who just now held the fool's wand is leaning on a scythe by the side of the throne, fleshless and eternal. We may train ourselves into the most perfect form of individuality and the most happy adaptation to our neighbours, yet some day, somewhere, in the society we and they have so ingeniously devised together, or in our own mind, or in the tissues of our body, a forgotten guest will make his entry—the furious desire of self-annihilation. One of its names is Communism.

And you, Harold! who are so willing to abjure all illusions of personal happiness, do they never revive within you? do your arguments never melt under some spark more 'powerful than reasoning? I cannot help thinking that there are mighty systems of thought which a flash of joy would dissolve into simpler and more available elements, some disinterested fellowship on the one hand, and on the other—well, on the other the excellent philosophy of the Scotch poet who knew so much more than the deep heads:

> "Ye're naught but senseless asses O!
> The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
> He dearly loved the lasses O!"

Again: can we any of us get along without the occasional warning of a voice that repeats,

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in different words, perhaps, the burden of Lothaire's thoughts: "My kingdom is not of this world"? We have all of us a spot of sacred ground, a corner where for the sake of some dream, some affection, some pride, we would disregard our most palpable interests. But can any one listen to this voice alone? The man has yet to be born whom the endeavour would not pervert into a hypocrite.

You seem to me to cling to your theories because each of you, through his own particular one, has worked his way up to a point where a force may be found that we cannot discover within ourselves. And one of you finds it in the creed of an after-life, and the other in that reciprocal pressure of one individual on another whence our social fabric results; and the third in an uncomprising negation of the boundary lines of self. If I say that to me there is something incomplete in these and any teachings, if I refuse to choose between them because I hold that their value lies less in their tenure than in the previous unconscious work that they complete in you—all you can rightly demand of me is that my denial should furnish me with the same outlet as your assent. Whether it be, as with you, by means of beliefs and theories, or, as with me, by ascribing them all to the same plastic

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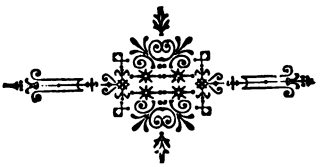
power we see manifested in the visible world, that we issue forth from ourselves—it matters little. We have ceased to look inwards, we have caught sight of an outward fire; and the clamorous love of our own ways is silenced, hushed in the solemnity of deep-fathomed space. Yes! the light has come from without.

HAROLD.

Enough, friends! the sun is rising.



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